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Washington MONTHLY

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By Steven Waldman

The evangelicals who are bolting the GOP
By Amy Sullivan

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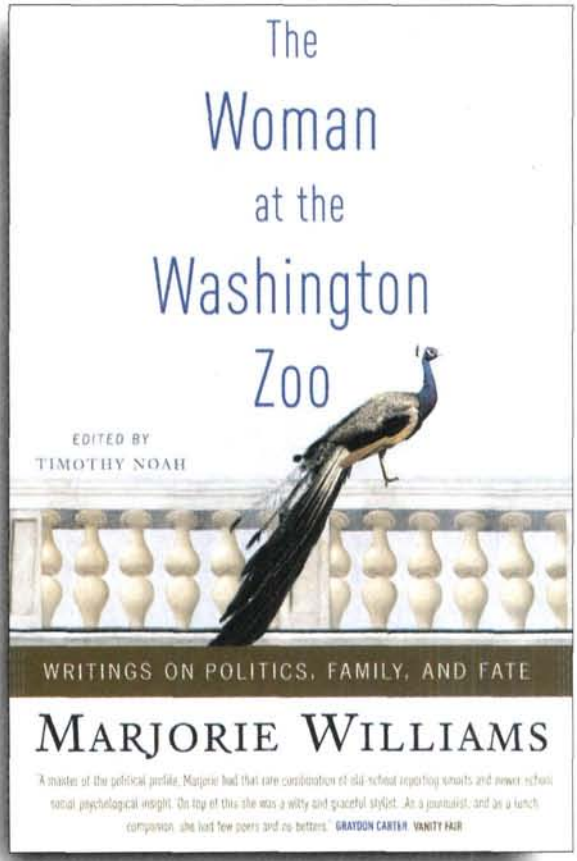

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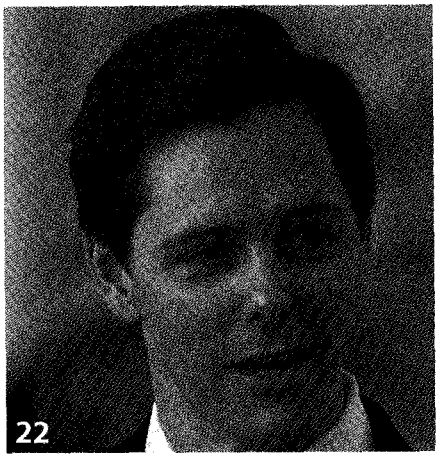
Washington MONTHLY

Volume 38, No. 4
April 2006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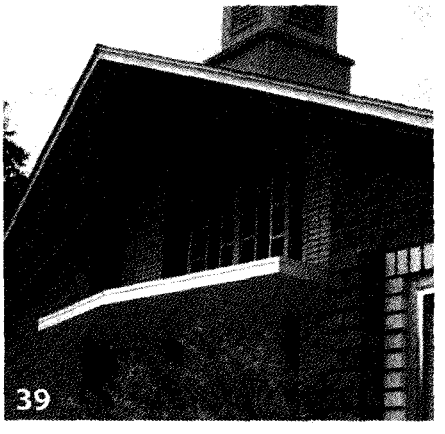
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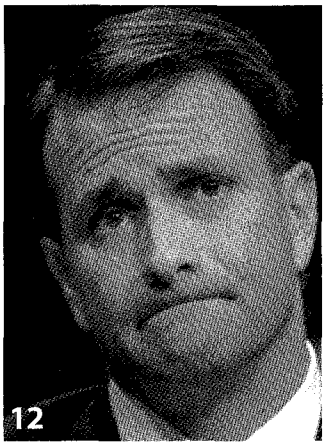

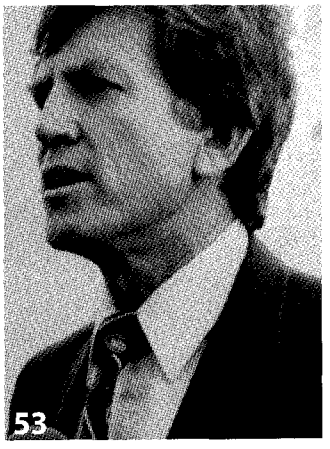

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Letters

Pay-to-play hunting

I am a progressive who hunts, and there certainly does seem to be a growing sense in the hunting community that progressives represent their interests better than the conservatives. Having been an environmentalist all of my adult life, and an occasional member of the Sierra Club and of similar organizations, I've been upset at the consistent stereotype that hunters are anti-environment.

The hunters I've met spending time on my family's ranch in rural east Texas are certainly socially conservative. And of course they do love their Second Amendment rights. But they have the good sense to know that a vote for Republicans who back oil and mining interests and take anti-environmental stances is a vote against their interests on this issue. They are also receptive to instances that pit the big guy versus the small guy, and the closing of access to land and wildlife by well-to-do private property-owners is just such as issue.

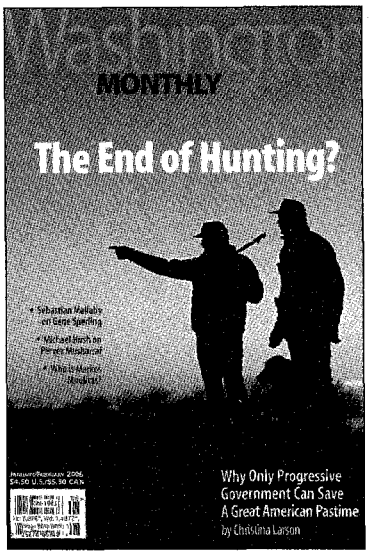
The hunters truly love the land and its creatures. Most people need a concrete connection to something for it to appeal to their visceral sense of right and wrong. Protecting land, wildlife, and access to it is that for hunters.

The left needs to frame it so that the big guy is the Republicans and the big money interests they're in bed with. Instead the right has been able to frame it so that the big guy is the Democrats and big government who are going to tell them what to do with their land.

Peter Williams
Oakland, Calif.

I was very surprised, but thrilled, to see your articles on hunting and fishing access as issues on which progressives should work. I fully agree that we of the "hook-and-bullet" crowd who do not vote Republican — and there are many of us, including all of the many relatives and friends with whom I hunt and fish — need to exert our potential influence to preserve access for the public to land and water. We also need to build bridges between ourselves and those who are not hunters and fishermen, but who also love the outdoors. They are our natural progressive allies (though there will be resistance from those opposed to hunting, including some within Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy).

Scott Dirks
Via email



January/February 2006

I am a fifth-generation Montana native, and I neither hunt nor fish. But I am concerned about declining access to public and private land. The issue is not just about hunting but about whether the public will have a place to enjoy backpacking, birdwatching, chasing rainbows, daydreaming, fishing, floating, gawking, hiking, idling, picnics, photography, river wading, rock and gem collecting, you name it.

In Montana, we have the strongest law guaranteeing public access to streams in the United States, and our new governor is one of its biggest boosters. A while back the law was challenged by the Mountain States Legal Foundation — the organization of Joseph Coors, Gale Norton, and James Watt. That challenge concerned an access dispute on Montana's Ruby River. The foundation didn't win that case, but similar challenges to preserve public access will continue.

Jackie Corr
Butte, Mont.

This is a very timely and accurate article. Today only one in ten hunters is under the age of 40. Unless we work to get more young people involved, our entire wildlife conservation model is threatened. But there are organizations working to improve the outlook — for example, the Conservation Buck Society, founded by Broadway star and country music singer Gary Morris. For the past year, Morris has been working to engage the existing hunting community in a program designed to raise awareness of hunting and conservation as of one consciousness.

Wayne Edwards
Nashville, Tenn.

This article is a very good exposé of hunting in some areas of the Midwest. I am an avid hunter; I spend around 50 days per year hunting North Dakota and the surrounding states. Here in North Dakota we have a program called PLOTS, which is an acronym for Private Land Open To Sportsmen. We currently have nearly 800,000 acres of PLOTS land in our state that are open to everyone, resident and nonresident alike.

Hunting is good in North Dakota. It has even been referred to as legendary. Part of the reason is due to the wide range of habitat that is in the PLOTS program. Many acres enrolled in the federal conservation reserve program (CRP) are in the program as well. With CRP's future in jeopardy because of expected budget cuts, I worry that PLOTS may very well be in trouble also.

In America, we have been morphing toward a pay to play hunting climate more and more over the last few years, and PLOTS acres have filled the gap to a degree for those of us that chose not to pay-to-play.

Will the "Open Fields" bill make a difference? First it has to pass, and second it needs to pass without the typical add-ons and regulations that historically lard up much of the legislation out of Washington D.C.

Bob Kellam
Fargo, N.D.

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Subscription Rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. *Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues* by The Washington Monthly, LLC, wholly owned by W.M. Corporation, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation.

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Editorial offices: 1319 F Street, NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20004; tel: 202-393-5155 / fax: 202-393-2444
Publishing offices: 916 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94133; tel: 415-402-0252 / fax: 415-402-0922

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Christina Larson plays a mournful violin for "The End of Hunting" while others of us are playing a trumpet call. Hunting may be a traditional activity at some level, but so much of what passes for hunting little resembles the sport of old. While sport hunting continues its natural decline, public officials who want to preserve America's traditions and provide a boost to America's economy should implement programs that encourage bird watching, wildlife photography, and other humane outdoor activities.

Michael Markarian
Executive Vice President
The Humane Society of the United States
Washington, D.C.

The steep decline in hunting is a cause for optimism in the progressive community.

Friends of Animals, a progressive organization, asks the members of our society to transcend violence in all aspects of our lives, and this includes the hunting of other conscious, social beings.

Bill Dollinger
Director
Friends of Animals
Washington, D.C.

While I agree with the author that it is very important to save public lands from exploitative uses such as mining, that does not mean the only viable solution for protection of land is hunting.

The article's assertion that "wildlife belongs not to private interests but the public," smacks of speciesism. As Alice Walker said, "The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans anymore than black people were made for whites, or women for men."

Caroline Cherry
Bethesda, Md.

CORRECTION: After my profile of the blogger Markos Moulitsas appeared in our January/February issue ("Kos Call"), Moulitsas wrote a post on his weblog challenging some of the facts in my piece, and in many instances he turned out to be right. My piece quoted a staffer for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee indicating that Moulitsas makes calls to prospective candidates on behalf of the DCCC. The source was definitely in a position to know, and a review of my notes shows that the quote was what my source said. When I emailed him after publication for clarification, the source said that while he had "brainstormed" with Markos, a different blogger had made the recruiting calls. This is Moulitsas's position too, and I take him at his word. My story stated that Moulitsas speaks frequently and regularly with DCCC chair Rahm Emmanuel and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid. In fact, he speaks regularly with their staffs, never with Emmanuel, and only very occasionally with Reid. The speech Moulitsas gave to the Senate Democratic caucus took place in the Kennedy Center and not, as my story had reported, in the Capitol's LBJ room (the normal place such caucuses occur). And I have no reason to doubt Moulitsas when he says he talked about how Democrats can use blogging politically and not about overall political strategy. Nor do I doubt that he raised for Democratic candidates more than the $500,000 I said he did. When I wrote that his site gets "3.7 million weekly readers," I should have used the technical term "unique visitors," which is the closest available approximation of a website's readership, but is certainly bigger than the actual number of weekly readers. And the piece gave the incorrect date for an incident in which Moulitsas responded on his weblog to television images of cheering mobs dragging the charred, dismembered bodies of American contractors through the streets of Fallujah. That happened in March 2004, not June 2003. —*Benjamin Wallace-Wells*

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**

Scary facts

When I wrote last month about the explosion of lobbyists during the 1970s, I wish I had known a statistic that subsequently appeared in *Washingtonian* magazine. In just the three years between 1972-1975, the number of the capitol's lawyers doubled. In the 30 years since, the number has doubled twice more, but never has the growth been so intense as during those three years in the '70s.

By the way, the present number of lawyers practicing in Washington is 81,548. That means that one person in seven you run into on the street is probably heading from their law firm to Capitol Hill, or to some federal agency, where it can be safely assumed that he or she will represent the interests of the average citizen, rarely if at all.

But I would miss my tea and crumpets

I was delighted when I read about Condoleezza Rice's plan to transfer diplomats from Europe to understaffed posts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. One longtime problem with the foreign service has been that it was too successful in concentrating jobs where the living was easy, and where the real need for American diplomats did not justify the assignments.

Unfortunately, when I read the list of countries that will lose foreign service jobs under the Rice plan, I saw that only two of the reassigned diplomats will come from Britain, and none from France, Switzerland, Italy, or Spain, which have traditionally been the cushiest, most sought-after, and consequently most overstaffed.

First we'll need a commission

John Boehner, the new House Majority Leader, recently told Tim Russert that he didn't intend to rush into lobbying reform. You will understand Boehner's resolve not to be hasty when you learn, as we did from *The Hill*, that more than 20 of his former staffers now work as lobbyists. And *Newsweek*'s Holly Bailey and Eleanor Clift note that just since 2000, "Boehner has taken more than $150,000 worth of junkets paid for by private interests, ranking him in the top ten of all members of Congress."

And the snack bar is better

Since 9/11, it has been crystal clear that we have needed more spies in countries where plots against us may be being hatched. Yet according to Bill Gertz of *The Washington Times*, even after all the talk about the need for better intelligence since 9/11, we have fewer than 1,000 intelligence officers "working in the field as spies and spy handlers." *US News & World Report* puts the figure at 1,200.

Whichever is right, the figure represents a miserably low percentage of the 20,000 or so CIA employees. Certainly, it reflects poor leadership from the Bush administration. But as veteran students of bureaucracy know, it also reflects a truth about the CIA bureaucrats that is similar to why foreign service officers try to preserve the cushiest assignments in Europe. At the CIA, the institutional preference seems to be for the safety and comfort of a headquarters assignment at Langley.

Ahmet, your convoy is here

Bill Gertz says that 200 of the CIA field officers are assigned to Iraq. And in Iraq, according to Linda Robinson and Kevin Whitelaw of *US News*, these agents are required to leave the Green Zone only in armor and with three cars. According to Bob Baer, the agent who was the model for George Clooney's character in *Syriana*: "You can't pick up an asset with three cars." Can't you see the potential Iraqi recruit lurking furtively in a doorway, praying his neighbors won't see that he's meeting an American, only to have the CIA's three-car convoy roar down the road and screech to a halt right in front of him?

Did you see her hair?

I could not believe it! Less than two months after embarrassing itself by running a snotty piece by Robin Givhan ridiculing Harriet Miers's clothes and makeup, *The Washington Post*'s Style desk turned Givhan loose on Martha Ann Alito. Givhan observed that the fabric of Alito's suit was "like the upholstery that once covered La-Z-Boys," and that the Alitos were dressed "in the manner of a family heading off to the Sears photo studio."

Putdowns are rarely as artful as the author thinks. Givhan should realize that there is a danger that your own tastelessness will be revealed in the process—and that the worst targets for put-downs are unpretentious people like Miers and the Alitos.

They gave him room and board, too

It has now been almost three years since George W. Bush declared

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"Mission Accomplished" in Iraq. And still the Iraqi army is not strong enough to replace our own. Why is this? One clue comes from Major Gen. Paul Eaton, who was the first officer assigned to create an Iraqi army. He says he got the assignment on May 9, 2003, a week after Bush's speech.

As an indication of just how seriously the Pentagon took the task even that May is the staff given Eaton. He explained to Thom Shanker of *The New York Times*: "I set out to man, train and equip an Army for a country of 25 million—with six men."

Why Cheney changed

When Brent Scowcroft told the *New Yorker*'s Jeffrey Goldberg that he used to admire Dick Cheney, but that Cheney had so changed that Scowcroft no longer felt he knew him, I recognized the feeling. I have known Cheney for 25 years or so, his wife even longer. I knew that we disagreed on most issues, but I always found him reasonable and respectful of facts. I was actually pleased when George W. Bush chose him as his running mate. Since 2001, however, the vice president has seemed increasingly rigid and so indifferent to the facts that he misrepresents them repeatedly. It was as if he were the Manchurian Candidate, in whose brain Osama bin Laden had implanted a chip designed to make Cheney do whatever would inflame relations between Islam and the West.

Cheney's change has had its impact on Dubya, who as governor of Texas was much more willing to listen to the other side than he is today. When Chris Matthews recently asked Paul Burka, the veteran Texas journalist, what had changed Bush, Burka replied: "Dick Cheney."

But that still leaves us with the question of what changed Cheney. I have two guesses. The last time I had an extended conversation with his wife, Lynne, was in the early 1990s. I noticed then that she had become much more rigidly conservative. So perhaps Cheney was influenced by his spouse. The other possibility—considerably more fanciful but nevertheless, by my own guess, closer to the truth—is psychological. There is considerable evidence that Dubya thought his real father was wishy-washy. I suspect he was looking for a strong father, that Cheney perceived this need, and that Cheney realized that if he filled that role, he would practically become president himself—or at least have far more influence than most vice presidents. All Cheney had to do was be decisive, ignore the other side, and never waver.

An agency that delivers

Phillip Longman's article praising the Veterans Administration in our January/February 2005 issue has recently received support from a study by the National Quality Research Center at the University of Michigan, comparing patients' ratings of care provided by the VA with that provided by private facilities. The VA got a rating of 83 on outpatient care compared to the private figure of 76. Even more impressive were the inpatient scores—76 for the private facilities, 84 for the VA. Another argument for socialized medicine!

Don't believe anything I say

The qualms about Chief Justice Roberts's endorsement of the lawyer's role as hired gun expressed in this column recently are shared by our alumnus Michael Kinsley. Pointing out in a column last month that Roberts told the Senate judiciary committee that "the position a lawyer presents on behalf of a client should not be ascribed to that lawyer," Kinsley observes: "If the average potential juror knew that lawyers actually take pride in not believing what they say, it could wreck the whole [legal] system."

Now is the time

"In all, the Bush administration abandoned or delayed implementation of 18 proposed safety rules that were in the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration's regulatory pipeline," reports Joby Warick of *The Washington Post*. But there are signs that the folks at MSHA are feeling guilty. A couple of the mothballed proposals, including mandatory caches of oxygen tanks and breathing masks and expanding the number of rescue teams seem to have been put on the fast track for approval. MSHA also, reports the *Charleston Gazette*, recently intervened before a federal judge on behalf of having the United Mineworkers participate in safety hearings, a matter about which they had previously been less than enthusiastic.

This is the time for mine safety advocates to strike. Not only are MSHA officials feeling guilty, so are members of Congress. One state legislature, West Virginia's, has already enacted new safety requirements.

Another reason the time is ripe for reform is that the coal industry is booming. With oil and natural gas prices sky high, "the fuel of the future is coal," reports a Wall Street newsletter. This is important because many times in the past, mine owners have been able to plead hardship, saying that business was bad and that they could not afford safety measures. Sometimes even the mineworkers themselves would go along, fearing they'd lose their jobs if the

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expense of safety requirements caused a mine to close. Now that the mine owners have no such excuse, the moment for reform is here.

News you can't use

The teasers during a January "NBC Nightly News" kept promising to tell listeners what to do in the event of stroke. Since I'm a senior citizen, I got out my pencil and pad and prepared to take notes on what steps I should follow to save myself. When the report began, the reporter said to take a drug called ATP three hours from the onset of symptoms. But just as I was dutifully writing down this information, the reporter said, "Then again, if you take ATP, you may cause another stroke."

Finding fresh beer

The Wall Street Journal has performed a great service for beer drinkers. Veteran imbibers know that the fresher the beer is, the better it tastes. The problem is, how can you tell how fresh the beer is before you buy it? Now comes the *Journal* with an explanation of the code on the label that reveals the date by which the beer should be consumed. In the cases of three of my favorites—Miller Genuine Draft, Pabst Blue Ribbon, and Pilsner Urquell—the codes are easy to understand: The month, day, and year come in order, so that 03-13-6 means March 13, 2006. Several others, like Sapporo, can be pretty tricky, with the month indicated by a letter of the alphabet—A for January, etc. That's why I welcome the *Journal* article.

Alumni aren't supposed to care about what happens to the money

You may recall my items about the Robertson family's frustration with Princeton University. In 1961, they gave the University $35 million to train graduate students at the Woodrow Wilson school to serve in the federal government, especially in international relations. But over the years, the family came to suspect that much of the money was not being used for this purpose, and, taking a step that must have made university presidents tremble and of course delighted me, the Robertsons sued. Now according to John Hechinger and Daniel Goldin of *The Wall Street Journal*, a smoking gun has been discovered.

When Chris Matthews recently asked a veteran Texas journalist what had changed Bush, the journalist replied "Dick Cheney."

It seems that in 2002, the university's secretary, Thomas Wright, warned his president, Shirley Tigheman, that a document about to be sent to the Robertsons disclosed that money from their fund was being used to pay students outside the Wilson school and for other purposes. Tigheman, perhaps inspired by the example of Richard M. Nixon and Rosemary Woods, chose to delete the disclosure from the document given to the Robertsons.

This case is disturbing not only because of Princeton's arrogance but even more because we desperately need to encourage and train bright young people to go into public service.

Gorelick for Bush?

I've discovered a fact embarrassing to our side and, having just criticized Princeton's president for nondisclosure, I'm afraid I have to come clean. In 1994, there was a story in *The Washington Post* by R. Jeffrey Smith headlined "Administration backing no-warrant spy searches," which quotes Clinton's Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick as believing the "President has inherent authority to conduct warrant-less searches for foreign intelligence purposes." To Gorelick's credit, she went on to support legislation providing for warrants. But nonetheless, she does seem to have endorsed the current administration's theory.

Safety comes ninth

The Wall Street Journal recently published a long article—36 paragraphs, to be exact—about the FAA's Air Traffic Control system, and its head, Russell Chew. The article examined many issues, including on-time performance, salary demands by controllers, and outdated technology. But there was not one word about safety issues. Safety is, or should be, the primary mission of the control system. It does seem worthy of a mention.

Boxcutters are soooo 2001

Speaking of safety, did you see that television docudrama about Flight 93, the one with the brave passengers and crew who thwarted one 9/11 hijacking at the cost of their own lives? The movie reminded us that box-cutters were the weapon of choice of the 9/11 hijackers.

The morning after the movie, I woke up to a story in *The Washington Times* about the TSA's decision to allow scissors up to four inches in length and screwdrivers up to seven inches. The TSA defended the decision with this explanation: "We believe that today's greatest risk is explosives." Since the 9/11 hijackers used box-cutters and not explosives, I find

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this explanation less than convincing. So, by the way, does the Association of Flight Attendants, which is fighting to restore the ban on scissors and screwdrivers.

Lowering the Barr

I often rely on the reporting of *The Washington Post*'s Stephen Barr for items in this column. So it is with reluctance that I find myself disagreeing with him. But he recently deemed "encouraging" a report from the Office of Management and Budget that found at least 72 percent of federal government programs work "at least to some degree" and that only 40 percent had management programs worthy of being called "good." If Barr finds these statistics encouraging, I can only say that his expectations must have been modest indeed.

They debated making it "exceptional," but concluded it fell just short

It should also be noted that the standards employed by the OMB study were not excessively rigorous. According to *The Washington Post*'s Al Kamen, FEMA was rated as "adequate."

Not entirely witless

George W. Bush told two jokes at the annual Alfalfa Club dinner that I must grudgingly acknowledge were pretty good.

"Martha Alito won America's heart. What a warm and wonderful woman. I talked to her. You want to know what really caused her to cry at those hearings?

"Boredom."

Bush also told about going to *Brokeback Mountain* with Dick Cheney.

"Dick sat through the movie, didn't say a word. We came out. After a while, he says, "Nice horses." And I said 'Yep.' Then he became real quiet and serious. I knew something was on his mind. He turned to me and said..."

Pause...

"You don't suppose the Lone Ranger and Tonto...?"

"I set out to man, train, and equip an army for a country of 25 million with [a staff of] six men." —Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton, the first officer in charge of training Iraqi troops

Hey, there are no straight interior decorators either

The Millennium Challenge Program is a Bush administration program that aims to make foreign aid more effective by funneling aid, in the words of the *Post*'s Michael A. Fletcher and Paul Blustein, "only to poor nations deemed to have relatively honest governments."

But the new organization ran into a problem. It sought to hire a "chief economist who would bring a well-regarded reputation in the development field. But the initiative fizzled when staffers could not find such an economist who was also a Republican."

Help wanted

When I began my book *Five Days in Philadelphia*, my main motive was to restore Wendell Willkie to the place in history that he deserved by demonstrating his crucial role as the Republican presidential nominee who gave a Democratic president the courage to make politically dangerous decisions in an election year—decisions that were vital to the survival of democracy. As I was writing the book, however, I realized there were differences between the country in 1940 and the way it is today that I wanted to explain so that young people would understand that we can do better, a lot better than we're doing now.

But I have failed. Although the book was generously reviewed, and I have received far more enthusiastic phone calls, letters, and emails from readers than for any of my seven other books, I've had to face the fact that except for a handful from younger *Monthly* alumni, these messages came from no one recognizably under 35.

So I ask for your help and advice in figuring out how to reach these young people and urge you to write me with your advice, care of the *Monthly*. The points I want to emphasize most are that we *can* have leaders like Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, and we *can* be willing to sacrifice by drafting ourselves into military service and paying higher taxes. We *can* have a dominant Christianity that supports liberal programs, and we *can* have a country where too many people are not trying to demonstrate that they are richer, smarter, and have better taste than the next guys, but where instead, they're trying to find common ground with their fellow citizens. It can happen because it did happen.

We can not only do better, we can also be better. Not that we won't still be recognizably human, with our share of failings. Even FDR and Willkie had their weaknesses. But they and we were able to rise to behavior characterized by considerably more idealism and generosity than is evident today.

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10 MILES SQUARE

The Man from the Smoke-filled Room

To get the ear of the new majority leader, you better light up.

By Alexander Bolton

In the vast, labyrinth-like spaces of the U.S. Capitol, each new generation of congressional leaders finds its own smoke-filled room, an informal spot where leaders banter with their underlings, form alliances, avoid reporters, and craft deals. When Tip O'Neill ran things, he used the Democratic cloakroom, a pinched hideaway filled with a snack bar, beat-up leather couches and rows of telephone booths. Under Tom DeLay, it was Room H219, an elegant if sparse venue primarily recommended by its terrific views of the Capitol's west lawn. But with the ascent of John Boehner, the Ohio Republican elected to replace DeLay as majority leader on Feb. 2, Hill insiders knew that a new power spot's time had come.

Boehner, after all, is the man from Smoker's Alley.

Art by Fred Harper

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During almost every series of House votes, while most of his ambitious colleagues elbowed their way through the crowd on the House floor searching for targets to cajole or browbeat, Boehner could be found puffing on his preferred cigarettes, Barclay's, in what has become known as Smoker's Alley—the relatively quiet southwest corner of the Speaker's Lobby, which is the long room that runs the length of the House chamber and also opens onto the Speaker's offices. And with the chief resident of Smoker's Alley now leading the House's majority party, this particular nook of the Capitol looks bound to become the new congressional power base. Its longtime residents—puffers who've become Boehner's pals—are the new super-insiders, and non-smoking members who want to up their chances of getting their earmarks passed may have to learn to light up.

Even without the wafting cigarette and cigar smoke, the Lobby is a throwback to another era. The hall is lined with chandeliers and a collection of fusty antiques— chairs, benches, a desk, something resembling a throne—few of which share origin or style. Along the walls hang the oil portraits of forgotten past speakers of the House, most of them staring out sternly from darkly shadowed backgrounds. The only nods to modernity are the electric lights, the newly-installed air filters, which always whir in the background, dispelling clouds of tobacco smoke, and a portrait of Newt Gingrich. Men aren't allowed in the lobby without a sports jacket and tie.

During busy votes, Boehner was often here sharing a smoke with two of his closest friends, Reps. Tom Latham of Iowa and Mike Simpson of Idaho. Latham and Simpson formed the core of the smokers' club, the congressional, grownup version of the crew that used to sneak butts in the high school parking lot. This group has also formed the core of Boehner's inner circle, which includes Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R-Ohio), who could also often be seen chatting or joking with his colleagues in the alley, Rep. Jim Saxton (R-N.J.), another frequenter, and Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.).

The group had met with Boehner for the past year and a half to discuss his return to leadership, Simpson told me during a recent interview. The original purpose of the discussions was to prepare Boehner to make a run for leader when Hastert decided to retire. But by the end of November, the group began to turn its sights to the position of majority leader. When DeLay resigned from the position after being indicted for criminally conspiring to circumvent Texas campaign-finance legislation at the beginning of this year, members of the group spent hours on the phone telling colleagues about Boehner's "vision for the conference" and convincing him that he would make a good leader.

Boehner was neither the establishment candidate to replace DeLay (that was Missouri Rep. Roy Blunt, the Majority whip whom the leadership had picked to replace the ousted Texan on an interim basis) nor the choice of the conservative ideologues and reformers (that was Arizona Rep. John Shadegg). But Boehner used his easygoing demeanor and middle-of-the-conservative-road policy positions to build on an early base of supporters, many of whom knew him from the smoker's caucus and endorsed him even when it looked as if Blunt would walk away with the race.

"It's very difficult the way Congress is run now to get to know your colleagues," says Simpson. But smoking in the Speaker's Lobby allowed Boehner to form personal bonds with a group of fellow Republicans, something that can be surprisingly difficult these days, when almost every minute of a lawmaker's workday is scheduled, and most congressmen fly back to their districts on the weekend. The smoking corner of the Speaker's Lobby gave a group of representatives a relaxed place to get away from what Simpson called the "hectic floor" to smoke, catch up with each other and "shoot the bull" and talk about "just anything going on." Another regular and Boehner insider, Rep. Thad McCotter (R-Mich.), told me that this kind of intimate time is essential in Congress, where "chasing

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member-on-member time is like chasing tissues in the wind."

Boehner has always been more than happy to be associated with smoking, both personally and politically—he was, after all, the man who, in 1995, handed out checks from tobacco lobbyists to his colleagues on the floor of the House even as Congress was voting on tobacco-related legislation. Some in the Republican caucus make the case that calling Boehner's informal headquarters "Smoker's Alley" gives the wrong impression of the place: "If anything," Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) told me, noting the room's very visible fireplaces, "call it the fire caucus."

But most Boehner insiders are perfectly pleased with the atmosphere they find around the new Majority Leader—smoke and all. "Generally people go to the Speaker's lounge or in the back to unwind and avoid some of the more argumentative [floor] debates," says McCotter. "Whoever's out there is out there for the same reason you are; it's a more laid back group."

Simpson said that Boehner's smoking buddies will be his "eyes and ears on the ground" and will help keep him from becoming too isolated in his leadership office from the rank-and-file. But on the other hand, Simpson said, his friendship with Boehner might just as well make it easier for the new leader to say "no" when he asks him for a favor—unless, of course, he's asking for a light.

Alexander Bolton is a reporter for *The Hill*.

Bad for the Jews, Worse for the Christians

How Abramoff, Reed, and DeLay sullied the faiths they profess.

By Rachel Morris

When Jack Abramoff arrived at federal court in Washington, D.C., this January to plead guilty to fraud, tax evasion, and conspiracy to bribe public officials, he wore a trenchcoat that strained across his stomach and an immaculate black fedora. Bemused observers wondered why Abramoff had chosen to appear in court dressed as a Mafia don. But the fedora—reportedly a Borsalino from Bencraft Hatters in Brooklyn—is also a ubiquitous accessory in the world of Orthodox Judaism, the faith that Abramoff has professed ever since watching "Fiddler on the Roof" as a 12-year-old. "I hope that I can merit forgiveness from the Almighty and from those I have wronged or caused to suffer," he told the judge, his face creased in contrition. Given the shamelessness with which he had defrauded his Indian clients, this display of devoutness may have seemed cynical. In fact, it was classic Jack Abramoff. As a man who spelled 'God' as 'G-d' in email messages, but referred to his tribal clients as "f'ing troglodytes" and entreated his staff to "get some $ out of these monkeys," Abramoff has always freely mingled the sacred with the profane.

Abramoff's activities have distressed his fellow Orthodox Jews, but they have proved even more problematic for evangelical Christians. In his lobbying campaigns, Abramoff cashed in on the conservative Christian credentials of two longtime allies: Tom DeLay, who has often used religious causes to shore up political power and who is now facing money-laundering charges of his own; and Ralph Reed, who duped his allies on the religious right into waging anti-gambling campaigns to benefit Abramoff's casino-owning clients. In DeLay and Reed, Abramoff found two similarly ambitious political players with few qualms about putting their public piety to the service of private corruption.

But by sullying the faiths they so publicly professed, the three have reminded many evangelicals of their historical aversion to mixing religion with politics. "Christ's spiritual kingdom and the civil order are two completely different things," John Calvin once observed. "We may not (as people commonly do) unwisely mix these two together." At the grassroots level, evangelicals have grown increasingly troubled by their leaders' embrace of politicians who are now mired in corruption probes. The Abramoff scandal marks an uneasy coming of

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age for the religious right as a political force: an acknowledgement that it has become sufficiently powerful to be worth manipulating for morally dubious ends—and a sign that the relationship between conservative Christians and the Republican Party may be fraying at the edges.

In Washington, Abramoff made no secret of his religious affiliation. He is a close friend of Rabbi Daniel Lapin, a controversial Orthodox Jew who is influential among evangelical Christians and is the author of *Thou Shalt Prosper: Ten Commandments for Making Money*. Abramoff served on the board of Lapin's foundation, Toward Tradition; he also directed $50,000 in donations through the organization in an effort to bribe an aide to former House majority leader Tom DeLay. When Abramoff was nominated to D.C.'s prestigious Cosmos Club, he turned to Lapin for spiritual endorsement. "I was wondering if you thought it possible that I could put that I have received an award from Toward Tradition with a sufficiently academic title, perhaps something like Scholar of Talmudic Studies?," he wrote. Lapin promised to "organize your many prestigious awards so they're ready to hang on the wall."

Abramoff also poured substantial sums into religious causes, although the money was invariably contaminated by his political dealings. He spent $200,000 each month on rent and salaries for the Eshkol Academy, a private Orthodox Jewish boys' school that he founded and used as a front group to launder large payments from tribal clients. (Rabbi Lapin's brother David was the academy's dean.) Abramoff also encouraged his

The Five Stages of Abramoff Grief

By Paul Waldman

Denial:

"The president does not know him, nor does the president recall ever meeting him."
—Scott McClellan

"You know, I, frankly, don't even remember having my picture taken with the guy. I don't know him."
—President George W. Bush

"I think it's really unfortunate. They broke the law and they've been found guilty breaking it. I had nothing to do with that. I haven't broken any laws. I did nothing wrong."
—Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas)

"I don't know who Abramoff influenced, but he never influenced me."
—Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.)

Bargaining:

"I guess he contributed to a lot of people, and a lot of contributions from his efforts went to Democrats and Republicans alike"
—Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.), discussing the Abramoff scandal

"It's a bipartisan congressional issue. And what we know so far from Jack Abramoff's actions as a lobbyist that it spread in a bipartisan way. So it's Republicans and Democrats."
—Brian Nick, NRSC communication director

"I had my picture taken with him, evidently. I've had my picture taken with a lot of people. Having my picture taken with someone doesn't mean that I'm a friend with them or know him very well."
— President Bush

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In 1969, the psychologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross identified the five stages of grief that make up the mourning period. To judge from their public comments since Jack Abramoff signed a plea deal with prosecutors, Washington Republicans and their allies have gone through a similar process.

Anger:

"The—the—the Abramoff scandal and the—and the Democrats have been, for the last six months or so, trying to make hay out of this culture of corruption. And I think that there is an even larger culture of corruption that we need to explore, and that's the culture of an ideology. I think liberalism is corrupting America. Liberalism, for some reason, has found itself on the side of our enemies. Liberalism seeks to exploit weaknesses here at home. The— the—the culture of liberalism has gotten so corrupt that it is hard to recognize it anymore."

—Rush Limbaugh

"And you, madam, don't know what you're talking about. OK? So, you are a Kool-Aid drinker who is blinded by whatever neurosis you have, because that's just insane."

—Bill O'Reilly to a caller on his FOX News radio show who (accurately) corrected O'Reilly's false claim that Abramoff donated money to Democrats as well as Republicans

"They have been trying to demonize, and their latest iteration of demonization is this culture of corruption. That dog doesn't hunt any more. It's not fair."

—Mary Matalin

Depression:

"[The Abramoff scandal is] much more dangerous for the Republican Party because we're the natural party of reform. Our base is the working, tax-paying American who doesn't like big government, doesn't particularly like Washington, and doesn't like this kind of behavior. And so, I think, we run a much bigger risk in these kind of scandals than do the Democrats whose base is, frankly, much more tolerant of corruption."

—Newt Gingrich

"What kind of breaks your heart is so many good people trying real hard to do the right thing that get lost in the shadows."

—Dick Armey

"The problem for the Republicans is the fact that we're in control, combined with the fact that we get elected because we're not supposed to do these kinds of things. I mean, they took over the House to get rid of the system that was in place, that had become corrupted over 30 years of one-party dominance and, you know, unfortunately in 10 short years, we've become them. That's what hurts."

—Warren Tompkins, Republican strategist

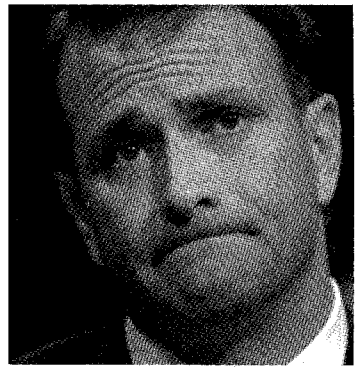
Acceptance:

"It is true that any Washington influence peddler is going to spread cash and favors as widely as possible, and 210 members of Congress have received Abramoff-connected dollars. But this is, in its essence, a Republican scandal, and any attempt to portray it otherwise is a misdirection."

—Rich Lowry, *National Review*

"I've got Jack Abramoff fatigue already. I mean, good grief, he didn't kill anybody. Maybe that one guy in Florida."

— Ed Rogers, GOP lobbyist



Paul Waldman is a Senior Fellow with Media Matters for America. His next book, *Being Right is Not Enough: What Progressives Can Learn From Conservative Success*, will be released by Wiley & Sons this May.

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clients to contribute to the Capital Athletic Foundation, telling them that it benefited inner-city kids and was a cherished cause of DeLay's. More than $100,000 of donations intended for the Capital Athletic Foundation were instead used to fund Schmuel Ben-Zvi, an Israeli who trained militant West Bank settlers. (Abramoff's communications sometimes make for bizarre reading: Musings about methods to extract "more moolah" from wealthy tribes are interspersed with exchanges with Ben-Zvi about the merits of thermal imaging equipment.)

Abramoff didn't seem to regard any of these activities as contradictory. Last May, he told *The New York Times Magazine* that he believed the "resources coming into my hands were the consequence of God putting them there." But Orthodox Jews have reacted to Abramoff's troubles with concern. Although Abramoff and Toward Tradition were on the periphery of the Orthodox community, many Orthodox Jews worry that they will be tainted by association. "We fear that people will, out of ignorance or bias, say 'that's what Jews do'," said Rabbi Basil Herring, the executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America, a national organization of Orthodox rabbis. "Beyond that, we also worry that legitimate lobbying activity on the part of the Jewish community could be negatively affected."

Lapin reportedly introduced DeLay and Abramoff around 10 years ago. As one of a handful of Washington lobbyists with strong ties to Republicans, Abramoff became a lynchpin in DeLay's K Street Project after the Republican takeover of the House in 1994. When Abramoff and Scanlon pitched wealthy Indian tribes, they promised to make their clients a "politician's best friend—or worst political nightmare" by touting their connections to DeLay's political muscle. DeLay once described Abramoff as "one of my closest and dearest friends;" while Scanlon was one of his former staffers.

DeLay converted to the Baptist faith during his first year in Congress in 1985. He had fallen in with a hard-partying group of legislators who knew him as "Hot Tub Tom," when a concerned colleague urged him to watch a James Dobson video on fatherhood, which left DeLay in tears. Since then, DeLay has frequently invoked his faith as a guiding force in his politics. He led the effort to impeach President Bill Clinton in 1999. More recently, he spearheaded the congressional attempt to reinsert Terri Schiavo's feeding tube and has railed against the federal judiciary, which he believes has "run amok" in its assault on the Christian faith. Less publicly, DeLay is also an ardent Christian Zionist—an evangelical who opposes any division of the Israeli state.(A former chief of the Israeli intelligence service once remarked that "the Likud is nothing compared to this guy"). "[God] has been walking me through an incredible journey, and it all comes down to worldview," DeLay told a Baptist gathering in Texas in 2002. "He is using me, all the time, everywhere, to stand up for biblical worldview in everything that I do and everywhere I am. He is training me, He is working with me."

For his efforts, DeLay became one of the religious right's most trusted politicians. In 2002, he received the Distinguished Christian Statesman Award from the Center for Christian Statesmanship, an organization founded by Dr. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries. Since then, DeLay has been charged with illegal fundraising in his home state of Texas. Reports have also emerged that he allegedly took foreign trips on Abramoff's credit card, and that one of his charities solicited donations from corporate sponsors in exchange for access to Republican lawmakers on a luxury yacht. Despite this, DeLay's evangelical backers stood by him. James Dobson of Focus on the Family announced that DeLay was the victim of a "trumped-up political witch hunt," while Tony Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council, encouraged supporters to pray for DeLay because "DeLay has been a stalwart on OUR issues, working diligently for the family and for life." For his part, DeLay has said that the ethical clouds hanging over his head have brought him "closer to God."

In addition to their high-level political contacts, Abramoff and Scanlon also promised their clients access to a grassroots network of conservative Christians to serve their goals. They outsourced this part of their work to Ralph Reed's consulting firm, Century Strategies.

Reed is also an evangelical Christian, although his writings suggest that politics have always been his true religion. In his book, *Active Faith*, Reed describes his political epiphany—the moment when he comprehended the elec-

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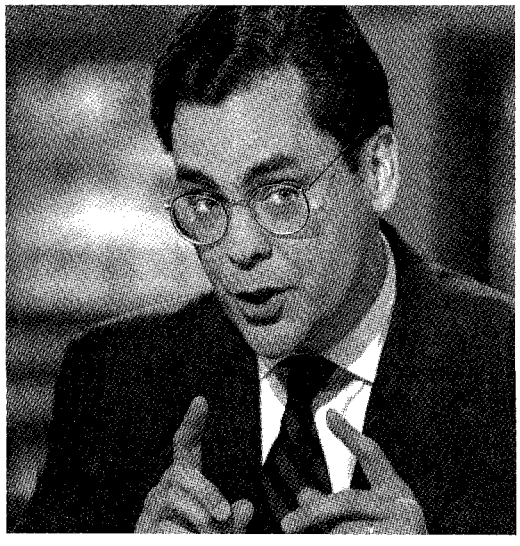
Tough Crowd

During the impeachment saga of the late '90s, certain Washington journalists and commentators drove Democrats crazy by seeming to side with President Clinton's Republican pursuers. *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote that Clinton would "say anything and hurt anybody to get out of a mess." Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor, relentlessly argued that impeachment was the only appropriate punishment for the president's crimes. And Susan Schmidt, a reporter at *The Washington Post*, often seemed little more than a stenographer for the steady flow of damaging leaks engineered by Ken Starr's office.

Lately, though, we've noticed that they've all been equally hard on the current president. Dowd recently wrote that under Bush, "We've lost all moral influence." Turley has been arguing that this president, too, should be impeached for ordering the NSA to conduct illegal wiretapping. And Schmidt, along with two *Post* colleagues, recently won the Worth Bingham Prize for her reporting on the Jack Abramoff scandal.

So, we asked them: Which president is worse?

Dowd: "Clinton was a farce, Bush is a tragedy."



Turley: "When you review these two presidents in terms of the impeachment clause, I see no distinction. All I see is two presidents who believe that they could commit criminal acts."

Schmidt: "I'm not particularly interested in being interviewed on this. My stories speak for themselves."

toral potential of the religious right—far more vividly than his spiritual conversion. After he and Abramoff earned their stripes by rejuvenating the College Republicans in the 1980s, Reed joined Pat Robertson's crusade to shape Christian conservatives into a potent political movement. As the director of the Christian Coalition, Reed attracted attention for his political talents more than his ideological fervor; he was a gifted orchestrator of grassroots campaigns. Now, in his new private sector incarnation, Reed effectively rented out his conservative Christian networks to Century Strategies' various clients,

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for sums that Abramoff described as "chump change."

Scanlon outlined Reed's pivotal role in an October 2001 memo to the Louisiana Coushatta tribe, explaining how the Christian right's abhorrence of gambling could be harnessed to protect the Coushatta's casino business. For $575,000, Scanlon promised to engineer floods of letters and phone calls from Christian conservatives to political representatives, protesting the operations of the Coushatta's competition. He also promised to have Christian leaders condemn rival operations in radio ads and in letters to key political figures. "Simply put we want to bring out the wackos to vote against something and make sure the rest of the public lets the whole thing slip past them," Scanlon wrote. "The wackos get their information from the Christian right, Christian radio, the internet and telephone trees." In another memo to the Coushatta, Scanlon noted that the quality of Reed's databases and connections would create a "political effort that truly resembles a people's movement" without the telltale marks of a "paid political operation."

Abramoff, Scanlon and Reed employed this strategy in several successful campaigns against existing or proposed gambling operations that threatened the interests of the Louisiana Coushatta and other tribal clients. Documents released by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs include letters to elected representatives from Dobson, Gary Bauer, Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum, and Don Wildmon of the American Family Association, as well as DeLay and two of his closest congressional colleagues, Dennis Hastert and Roy Blunt. In emails, Reed claims to have arranged radio pronouncements from Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. "Where are we with Falwell, Robertson, Dobson, etc?" Abramoff asked Reed in one February 2002 email. "[W]e need to see some action in DC. That's what I sold them for the 100K." Reed, who once called gambling a "cancer on the American body politic," eventually collected more than $4 million for his services.

So far, leading figures of the Christian right, like Dobson, Falwell, and Robertson, have remained mute on their role in Reed's campaigns—and on the broader subject of ethical lapses in politics. Ken Connor, a former president of the Family Research Council and the chairman of the Center for a Just Society, calls this lack of moral leadership an "embarrassing silence." Although there is no evidence that the leaders Reed worked with knew of his ties to Abramoff, their reputations have undoubtedly sustained a blow. As Tom Grey of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling puts it: "The best that you can say is that they were useful idiots."

In January this year, Reed walked into a Baptist church in suburban Atlanta to persuade 350 evangelical Christians that they should vote for him in the Republican primary for Georgia's lieutenant governor. The event probably didn't follow the script that Reed had intended. "As Christians we're held to a higher standard," the moderator began, according to an account in the *Virginian Pilot*. "Is there anything you've done in your political life that you wish you hadn't done?"

At the grassroots level, the Abramoff investigation has strained the Republican relationship with religious communities. Many evangelicals were deeply dismayed by the actions of Randy "Duke" Cunningham, the California Republican and Baptist who resigned from Congress after pleading guilty to accepting more than $2 million in bribes from defense contractors. Reed's use of Christian causes for his personal enrichment has provoked fresh outrage. "Ralph Reed is seen by some evangelicals as a conniver who used religion for political ends," said Lindy Scott, the director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics at Wheaton College. "I think this may bring out a little more caution in the evangelical world—we can't sell our soul to the Republicans or the Democrats."

Christian conservatives have experienced similar misgivings before. In the 1960s, Jerry Falwell spoke for many when he preached that evangelicals should not taint their spiritual mission by meddling in earthly politics (by the 1980s, he had apparently changed his mind). In the late 1990s, religious conservatives questioned whether the Christian Coalition's support for the Republican Party had delivered them any tangible gains. The Abramoff affair, however, threatens to leave a deeper stain on the credibility of evangelical leaders in the eyes of their own believers, who are now glimpsing the costs of their hard-won political power. No less an authority than Ralph Reed once wrote that conservative Christians were "changing the soul of American politics." Evangelicals are now discovering that this process works the other way around.

Rachel Morris is a freelance writer and former assistant editor at *Legal Affairs*.

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Shift Work

Should policing illegal immigration fall to nurses and teachers?

By Douglas McGray

Just an hour from San Francisco, on the road to Fresno, a rancher has sheared a giant cross, and the words "Jesus Saves," into a grassy hillside. A little farther south, a National Rifle Association banner billows from a long truck bed, parked by the side of Route 99 until harvest time. Away from California's big cities and the cool Pacific coast lies a flat, fertile landscape that's politically more like Indiana than Marin County. Here, in California's Central Valley, U.S. citizens and illegal, undocumented immigrants have lived in a kind of awkward partnership for decades. As they do business now, the region's lucrative commercial farms (the foundation of an otherwise shaky economy) would shut down without undocumented labor. Yet the cultural impact of that huge undocumented workforce remains a sore point with conservative locals.

Pat Farmer, a police captain, drives his black-and-white squad car across South Fresno, surveying the neighborhood through dark wraparound sunglasses. He cruises past dilapidated bungalows packed with families who overflow into beat-up silver trailers; past a condemned house, behind a broken picket fence, where a Mexican methamphetamine ring used to operate; past a block of Chinatown bars where old, sunburned Mexican men in white cowboy hats linger outside. Most of these residents work hard and don't cause trouble, but many are also here illegally.

Cops like Farmer must strike a delicate balance in a neighborhood like this one, between enforcing the rules and alienating illegal residents (whom they are both legally and morally obligated to protect, and whose cooperation they need to keep the peace). For instance, undocumented workers cannot, by law, have drivers' licenses, and virtually none has insurance. So Fresno's cops spend a great deal of time busting illegal immigrants for traffic violations and impounding their cars. Every farm worker you talk to seems to have had a car impounded for driving without a license, many, more than once, and each incident brings fines and fees that can equal a month's salary—a huge blow. "They're running the gauntlet each time they're out on the road," Farmer says, not unsympathetically. But while many illegal workers feel targeted by traffic cops, it is significant what the police refuse to do: turn them in to federal immigration authorities.

"We don't enforce immigration laws," Farmer tells me firmly. "We care about behavior. It's not where you're from, it's what you're doing." And that is official: local ordinances bar Fresno cops from so much as making small talk about immigration status, a policy police veterans like Farmer strongly support. The department—which faces a growing gang problem, and the state's biggest meth trade, not to mention the usual stream of thefts and assaults every city police department can expect—simply lacks the resources, says Farmer, to deputize its cops as immigration officials. But resources, he explains, are only part of the problem. "Sometimes folks are here illegally, and they're the victim of a crime. We want them to call us," he says. "If someone is a witness, we want them to trust us." Farmer needed that trust just a month earlier, after a shooting outside a nearby convenience store. "There were numerous witnesses," he says, "a lot of folks who were probably illegal. It was critical that they talk to our detectives."

But procedures that make sense to cops on the beat may seem ridiculous to many citizens. Why shouldn't police—or teachers, or emergency workers, for that matter—lend overwhelmed immigration officials a hand? Federal agents arrested more than a million people trying to cross in 2004; still, the number of illegal immigrants living in the United States has grown by 23 percent during the first half of this decade, according to a recent Pew Hispanic Center study, and some half a million more take up residence each year.

Legislators in Washington have been modest about checking illegal immigration since the 1980s (a 1996 reform, which made border crossing more difficult, mostly encouraged undocumented workers to settle

Douglas McGray is a California-based writer and a fellow at the New America Foundation.

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here with their families, instead of commuting back and forth for seasonal work). And no wonder: For every Republican agitator who talks about an "invasion" and gripes about pressing "1" for English, there is a big business lobbyist whispering that sub-minimum-wage workers are awfully good for the bottom line. For every liberal pressure group pushing reform on the grounds that illegal immigrants will forever be exploited immigrants, there is another that would prefer to just ease the stigma of "undocumented" status.

Until recently, most Americans lived in communities where few (if any) illegal immigrants settled. Conditions were ideal for a policy of willful inattention. But that's changing, as immigrants—legal and illegal—increasingly settle throughout the country. California's share of the country's estimated 10 million illegal residents is shrinking, as dozens of states from Virginia to Idaho see their undocumented populations explode. In a handful of these new immigration hubs, more than half of the foreign-born population is now undocumented.

Congress and the president have finally begun to talk about overhauling the slow, dysfunctional legal immigration system, which drives honest job seekers underground, and putting enforcement at the border that does more than just divert people into a lethal desert. But they have found no meaningful consensus on how to do it. The Republican House may agree to throw more money at the Department of Homeland Security or slap illegal immigrants with heavier penalties, but this is the legislative version of looking busy. Both President Bush and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) have campaigned for an approach that mixes new options for immigrant laborers with beefed-up enforcement, but neither has made much headway.

As a result, state and community leaders are rushing into the void. Since last year, legislators in 21 states, from New York to Alabama, have debated dozens of bills designed to deputize public employees for a new kind of immigration fight. To them, it seems obvious that local cops should detain illegal immigrants for deportation. It seems pragmatic to encourage local emergency rooms to patch up anyone who is seriously ill or injured, but insist that they turn other undocumented immigrants away, and maybe even share patient data with immigration officials. Just about anyone who collects a city, county, or state paycheck could do a little immigration work on the side.

These scattered state and local efforts have even started to catch the attention of conservative lawmakers in Washington. In October, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas) called on the Department of Homeland Security to train and fund community border patrols made up of local police and immigration enforcement hobbyists like the Minutemen. And at the end of January, Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisc.) proposed an immigration bill that would supersede local laws, like Fresno's, that keep police from checking the immigration status of people who come forward to report crimes or help an investigation.

Bills like Sensenbrenner's, combined with the efforts of local legislators around the country to press their own civil servants into the fight against illegal immigration, could produce a revolution in immigration enforcement. But they may also set off a revolt by the very cops, teachers, and welfare workers legislators seek to deputize. These workers feel, with a good deal of justification, that they can either do their jobs effectively, or act as immigration police—but not both.

Community policing

Last summer, I visited Fresno's Republican mayor, Alan Autry, a former Green Bay Packer and television actor. Tall and sunburned, with the thick features of an ex-jock and a vestigial drawl from his Louisiana childhood, Autry played guys named Whitey and Bubba on shows like "Hunter," "The Dukes of Hazzard," and "In the Heat of the Night." A few weeks before, he had made the national news by declaring immigration policy the focus of his second term in office. "Some will say the illegal immigration issue should not be included in a State of the City address," he began, rightly anticipating a controversy. "They will say the border is a federal issue, not a local issue. Well, the actual crossing of the border illegally may very well be a federal issue, but the consequences, all of them, that come after that are 100 percent local."

Autry looks fit for the role of an immigration hardliner ("big, ugly, white, and from the South," he deadpans.) But his motives for getting involved in the issue are more complicated than his lefty critics or his Minuteman fans assume. Local employers and middlemen prey on a workforce the region depends on, Autry told me. "We're having more and more instances of businesses working people for four weeks, not paying them, and then calling immigration," he said. Some employers literally work men to death: Just a few days earlier, a local laborer had died in the 108-degree heat, and farm workers gossiped about two other alleged deaths that failed to make the news. "How many anonymous bodies do we need to find in the orchards?" Autry asked. The undocumented make up nearly half of California's uninsured. In some of Fresno County's schools, upwards of a quarter of students may be undocumented, and many more are the children of undocumented parents. "We can't be a quality city without addressing this issue," he said.

Yet despite the visibility of illegal immigration in Fresno, Autry backs the local statute that prohibits cops like Farmer from reporting undocumented workers to the feds. "I don't believe we'll ever make a dent in the problem by approaching the symptoms," he said. Instead, he has tried to organize fellow mayors to lobby Congress for comprehensive immigration reform,

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Encouraging cops to arrest people simply on suspicion of being illegal will almost certainly lead to legal immigrants —indeed, almost anyone who might conceivably look foreign— being jailed until they can prove their legal status.

including a guest-worker program.

Elsewhere in the country, however, state and local officials are taking a different approach. In the last three years, Arkansas, Alabama, Virginia, and Florida legislators all moved cops to the immigration beat, requiring them to check citizenship status for the feds, and even training immigration specialists to help do the job. Legislators in New York, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland debated similar bills, and the mayor of Danbury, Conn., called on his state to do the same (his office estimates that 20 percent of Danbury's residents today are undocumented).

State police in Alabama and Florida started small, training only a couple of dozen officers for immigration duty. But now, Florida is doubling those ranks. In Texas, Gov. Rick Perry has pledged $10 million, 50 new immigration detectives, and National Guard training to help local deputies police the border—"not because it is the state's responsibility to control the federal border," he clarified, "but because the state of Texas cannot wait for the federal government." Officials in Orange County, Calif., have proposed training as many as 500 local officers to check the papers of anyone they suspect of a crime. And last fall, a Southern California assemblyman, Ray Haynes, campaigned for a ballot initiative that proposed the nation's first state border patrol, a brand new police force that would monitor the border and sweep the interior of the state for violators. "Bottom line," says Haynes, "the feds aren't doing the job."

In fact, local police are just the most obvious of an array of potential immigration enforcers, and handcuffs are just one approach to enforcement. Some communities have targeted undocumented residents with hassling campaigns. Danbury's mayor has ordered city building inspectors to count the cars in the neighborhoods where new immigrants congregate, inspect houses that look overcrowded, and write up fines. In Manassas, Va., local officials recently passed a housing ordinance limiting the members of any one household to a nuclear family and banning grandmas and cousins—a measure aimed directly at the city's sprawling immigrant population. (The measure was repealed in January, after criticism from civil rights groups.) And last year in the tiny New Hampshire town of New Ipswich, the sheriff charged a local undocumented worker with trespassing on public land, just for existing on American soil.

Other communities are more aggressive, building immigration enforcement into all kinds of government services. Legislators in Colorado and Alabama have proposed a mandatory citizenship check for all public services, except in cases of emergency. Federal law already requires proof of citizenship for the really expensive stuff, like Medicaid and welfare, or states have no choice but to make it universally available (public education through high school, urgent medical treatment, incarceration), so these proposals mostly build enforcement into less obvious programs: vaccinations for the poor, after-school tutoring, prenatal care, even hunting and fishing licenses. Florida and South Carolina have debated a bill to require undocumented immigrants to pay for any non-emergency hospital care in advance. Idaho lawmakers have proposed banning them from all county health services, unless the county agrees to deport patients once they are well, and pay the deportation bill. In Caldwell, Idaho, county officials have brought racketeering charges against businesses that hire undocumented laborers, an unprecedented take on organized crime laws. South Carolina legislators have actually proposed to arrest illegal immigrants, confiscate all their money and possessions, and throw them in state prison for five years.

Almost any public institution could be deputized. Some officials in Lowell, Mass., a diverse Boston suburb, want federal Department of Education permission to screen for illegal immigrants at the town's public vocational high school. Georgia, Kentucky, and New York have suggested barring undocumented immigrants from all state colleges, no matter how young they were when their parents brought them to the United States, and Virginia signed the idea into law. College "ought to be limited to the people who are not breaking the laws of this country," argued state delegate Jack Reid, who introduced the Virginia bill.

Then there are lawmakers who go even further—not only proposing to deny government services to illegal immigrants, but requiring that civil servants snitch on any they encounter, reporting them to federal immi-

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gration authorities. State legislators in Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Maine have aimed to turn everyone from nurses and community-college professors to child-welfare workers and park rangers into the eyes and ears of federal immigration authorities. Arkansas and Tennessee lawmakers actually recommended charging local, county, and state employees with misdemeanors if they identify an illegal immigrant and fail to pass any intelligence they have to the feds—identical to the federal sentence for sneaking across the border. "Illegal immigrants have been given a safe haven in this state," the so-called Arkansas Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act bristles.

All of these measures carry the genes of California's landmark Proposition 187, a 1994 ballot initiative that would have denied the state's undocumented immigrants access to any institution with taxpayer funding. It required doctors and elementary school teachers to turn in any illegal immigrants they identified, not just to turn them away. And it passed, with 59 percent of voters behind it. The measure fell apart after the federal courts ruled portions of it unconstitutional. But as undocumented immigrants have spread out from California since the early 1990s, so have the ideas embodied by Prop. 187. In the last election, Arizona voters passed a near copy of California's initiative, tailored to avoid the original's run-in with the courts. A delegation of Colorado state legislators visited the initiative's authors in Arizona last fall, and promised to bring a version before Colorado voters in November.

"Pay now or pay later"

Many local lawmakers insist these measures will help. But overwhelmingly, if quietly, the nurses, professors, administrators, cops, and outreach workers that lawmakers seek to deputize resist the call. One by one, New York, Los Angeles, and an array of other cities have written policies like Fresno's, strictly forbidding police officers to inquire about immigration status. And last fall, when federal legislators demanded that hospitals collect two pages of immigration data from patients to access a $1-billion fund for uninsured care, doctors and hospital administrators, including the American Hospital Association and American Medical Association, revolted. These objections are mostly practical. Local immigration enforcement, they say, will damage communities, destroy lives, cost far more than supporters understand, and do little to stop illegal immigration.

The San Joaquin Health Center, 30 miles southwest of downtown Fresno, sits across the street from a seed warehouse, and a lot filled with aging farm machinery. There is a clinic just like it in many of the tiny, no-stoplight towns that appear without warning and disappear just as quickly in the vast, green orchards of the Central Valley. Every seat in the waiting room is full on the morning I visit. But it is usually this way. The clinic, small enough to pass for a house, has about 35,000 active patients.

Roughly half of those patients have at least a little health insurance, one doctor tells me, as he scribbles on a farm worker's chart. The rest have nothing, usually because they are undocumented. The clinic charges uninsured patients for services, on a sliding scale, but many never pay, and that is o.k., says the doctor. The organization manages to stay solvent with county, state, and federal grants.

This is just the sort of care that many state lawmakers seek to outlaw. And they are right about one thing: These doctors know hundreds, maybe thousands of undocumented immigrants in the community. "They'll be very open," says Rodrigo Dezubiria, a clinic doctor. "'I snuck across the border, I snuck across five times.'" (At the county hospital in Fresno, administrators are even more systematic; they have the immigration status of tens of thousands of area residents stored in a confidential patient database.) But turning those patients away, or reporting them to the feds? "It's a simple-minded thing to suggest," says Dezubiria.

A week before my visit, an undocumented farm worker came to the clinic for the first time with gangrene creeping all the way up to his knee. It was a straightforward case of diabetes. Preventative care—the kind of treatment many state proposals would reserve for citizens—would have been easy and cheap. Instead, Dezubiria had to rush him to the hospital where surgeons amputated his leg, and absorbed an astronomical bill. "Pay now or pay later," Dezubiria shrugs. The expensive choice left a man disabled for life.

Community workers across professions share strikingly similar views of the dysfunction that would spread if state laws pulled them, or their colleagues, into immigration work.

Sarah Reyes, director of Fresno's nonprofit food bank, explains that, as it is, welfare offices have a perennial problem getting enough undocumented immigrants to show up. We walk past row after row of Fig Newtons and Ritz Crackers, Caesar dressing and bananas. They don't qualify for food stamps, she explains, but their American-born kids do. First, though, everyone in the household faces a detailed interview and digital fingerprint scan. If word got out that the welfare office reported immigration violations, they would never reach those American kids—more than a million under age 6, nationally, according to a recent study by the nonprofit Urban Institute.

Many immigrant families are "mixed status"—made up of both legal and undocumented residents—explains Roland Smith, director of Fresno's Department of Housing and Urban Development office. "In public housing," he says, "they struggle with this all the time." Like his colleagues across the country, Smith campaigns to get people away from shady check-cashers and payday lenders and into banks (which accept a

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Mexican ID card), encourage personal savings, and think about home ownership, all good things for Fresno's poorest neighborhoods. If people in his position had to report undocumented immigrants, families would avoid them—including lots of legal immigrants—but undocumented family members would not leave the country. "We know that!" he says. "If people are willing to die in the desert to make a living for their families, geez, they'll do anything."

Fresno's health, welfare, and housing workers share the same fears as city cops like Pat Farmer: Having to act as de facto immigration officers will undermine their ability to do their regular jobs—difficult jobs that have to be done well. Countless municipal workers across the country feel the same way. The International Association of Police Chiefs (IAPC) came out firmly against any effort to force any local police officers around the country into immigration duty. "Many leaders in the law enforcement community have serious concerns about the chilling effect any measure of this nature would have on legal and illegal aliens reporting criminal activity or assisting police in criminal investigations," writes IAPC president Joseph Estey. "We don't have the time and the personnel to be immigration agents," agrees Sixto Molina, South Tucson, Arizona's police chief—no stranger to the issue. "Murderers, rapists, robbers, thieves, and drug dealers present a much bigger threat than any illegal immigrant."

Plus, pressure to go after illegal immigrants can lead officers down a slippery slope, as the state of Alabama found out when it assigned its cops to immigration duty. Of the undocumented residents Alabama police arrested during the first six months of their new assignment, 85 percent had committed no other crime. Encouraging cops to arrest people simply on suspicion of being illegal will almost certainly lead to legal immigrants being jailed until they can prove their legal status. And for what?

"We are all border towns now"

To many citizens, it makes no sense that thousands of illegal immigrants routinely come to the attention of public officials without consequences. Local lawmakers have tapped into that frustration, even encouraged it. Not only do these laws make it harder for civil servants to do their jobs, but even federal immigration officials are, at best, ambivalent about this kind of help.

As chief of the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement office, Brian Poulson is the Department of Homeland Security's senior immigration enforcer in central California, a post he has held since the 1990s, when his office was called the INS. Lawmakers may be dreaming up new ways to tip Poulson and his team off to undocumented immigrants among them, but Poulson says his office is barely equipped to keep up with criminals and absconders and monitor potential terrorist targets like pipelines and airports.

"There are 45,000 people locked up in my area," he says. He estimates about 13,000 of them are eligible for deportation—and the jails often release them anyway, without warning his agents, when they run out of beds. "We are overwhelmed by that alone." Besides, he says, "we already get a tremendous amount of information from callers." Snooping neighbors, jilted boyfriends and girlfriends, people looking for the last word in an argument: They call all day long. "We have to tell them to write it down and send it in," Poulson says, "or we'd be on the phone all day."

Not that some of his colleagues aren't tempted by the idea of an easy, immediate solution. "That non-common- sensical thinking is everywhere, even at the border patrol," Poulson admits. He recalls a fight in his office, back when it was the INS. Another agent, he remembers, said 'I'm going to write a memo to the chief of police that he's in violation of federal law, because he wrote a new policy saying they won't call the INS.' We looked at him, and said, are you crazy? You expect them to call us for every immigrant they come across? It will bury us."

"I think we've reached oversaturation," he says. "You could triple our staff, I'm not sure how much difference it would make."

There is a way to help, he says, and it doesn't involve deputizing half of the public payroll: Massively increase patrols on the border, and offer an efficient, rational guest-worker program that lets undocumented immigrants find legal work, and forces employers to pay a fair wage and some benefits. Simplifying the legal immigration system at the same time would take further pressure off the border.

That is just a start. But it would mean Congress taking the initiative back from states and locals. Fresno's mayor, for one, would be thrilled. "The status quo has forced local governments into these little battles," Autry said—losing battles. These local schemes, he said, will do nothing but demonize undocumented residents. "I don't want them blamed for al Qaeda," he said, "or for lost jobs."

Of course, Congress will have to show sincere interest in the problem, enough to work out some deep differences before states get any further ahead of them. And that may mean risking the ire of voters in an election year. The Americans most passionate about immigration politics are unlikely to accept a practical compromise, and they will mobilize against any official who offends them—by, say, offering a chance at citizenship to undocumented workers who settled here long ago, or putting muscular enforcement at the border.

But an awkward issue for the reelection campaign is nothing to fear, compared with the dysfunction of a nationwide, piecemeal immigration system. No community will lie beyond its reach. "We are all border towns now," Poulson says wryly. "Even Washington, DC." ◆

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Deviously Ineffective

Ralph Reed has a long history of corruption—and of losing.

By Ed Kilgore

In the autumn of 1998, Georgians were jolted from their armchairs by television ads run by a Republican candidate for lieutenant governor with the nicely onomatopoeic name of Mitch Skandalakis. One commercial played what political writer Josh Marshall later described as "the D.W. Griffith card," charging gross incompetence on the part of Atlanta's predominantly black political leadership. Another featured an actor who resembled Skandalakis's opponent, state senator Mark Taylor, shuffling down a hallway at a well-known psychiatric and drug treatment facility near Atlanta. The ads were arresting, but they backfired. Skandalakis got stomped by Taylor, while a surprisingly high turnout among African Americans helped produce a victory for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Roy Barnes and other Democrats running statewide.

The Skandalakis campaign's top consultant was one of Georgia's most famous living sons—Ralph Reed. The former executive director of the Christian Coalition had left the financially troubled organization the previous year and launched a much-ballyhooed political consulting firm based in Atlanta called Century Strategies. The 1998 election cycle was supposed to be Reed's chance to prove that his political skills could stand on their own. But the reputation he developed wasn't the one he had hoped for. Republicans grumbled that his dirty tactics in the Skandalakis campaign were responsible for bringing down the party's entire state ticket. What's more, that campaign didn't seem to be the exception to Reed's *modus operandi*, but the rule. "Most [of Reed's clients] started out strong," wrote Marshall after the election, "with heavy appeals on moral issues (something Reed strongly advocated), faltered in the stretch, and, finally, resorted to a blizzard of low-ball (sometimes racially tinged) tactics before stumbling toward defeat."

Eight years after this ignominious debut in Georgia electoral politics, there's another controversial Republican candidate for lieutenant governor of the Peach State, whom fellow-Republicans openly fear could produce another disaster for the statewide ticket. His name is Ralph Reed.

If only one person can be said to serve as the incarnation of the conservative coalition that rules America today, it would probably be Ralph Reed. A well-known figure in Republican circles dating back to his early-1980s leadership position in the College Republicans under the tutelage of one Jack Abramoff, Reed skyrocketed to national prominence as the architect of the Christian Coalition, which helped lead conservative evangelical churches into a marriage of convenience with the Republican Party. Nimbly leaving the organization as it encountered legal and financial difficulties, Reed founded Century Strategies. Branching out after his inauspicious 1998 election season, Reed emailed his old mentor Abramoff: "Hey, now that I'm done with the electoral politics, I need to start humping in corporate accounts! I'm counting on you to help me with some contacts."

Casino Jack and other friends responded, and Reed's firm made millions, even as its principal kept his hand in among formal Republican politics, playing an unsavory but important role in George W. Bush's 2000 nomination campaign, allegedly running a rumor mill against John McCain in the crucial South Carolina primary. Reed's next move was to get himself elected Republican chairman in Georgia, just in time to get the keys to test-drive a high-tech, state-of-the-art GOP voter-targeting and mobilization system—piloted in Georgia in 2002 and deployed to marvelous effect nationally two years later—and to preside over the best Republican election year since Reconstruction.

But the very associations that fed Reed's rise to power and wealth are now embroiling him in scandal and reviving long-dormant resentments of the once invincible young prince (still only 44) in Republican and Christian conservative circles. The slow-motion riot of revelations about Abramoff's complex and corrupt network of lobbying shakedowns has drawn unwelcome attention to Reed, and at the worst possible moment, as he seeks to leap from political operative to elected official. His current campaign—according to his friends, the first step toward an eventual presidential run—is now in deep trouble, its cheery conservative message all but drowned out by the soft clucking of chickens coming home to roost.

Reed has been directly implicated as a key player in campaigns designed to eliminate gambling competition to Abramoff's tribal clients in four states: Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Century Strategies was paid $4.2 million in tribal money by Abramoff and his associates for its "grassroots" lobbying against gambling initiatives in Texas and Louisiana, and received another $1.15 million for

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similar efforts in Alabama. The Alabama incident has received particular public attention because the Christian conservative groups Reed worked with in that state have broadly hinted that he misled them about the source of the money, and also because another key Washington Republican institution, Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform, served as a conduit for some of the payments. Norquist is another old ally of Reed's from Abramoff's College Republican crew, and is generally considered the linchpin of the Republicans' Washington financial and ideological operation.

Reed's initial defense was to deny that he knew he was using gambling money to fight gambling. The disclosure of a variety of emails between Reed and Abramoff about the money's source—reflecting, moreover, Reed's avid demands for quick payment for his firm's services—has decisively undermined that defense. (In one email from Abramoff to his chief partner-in-crime, public relations hustler Michael Scanlon, Casino Jack complained that Reed had become "a bad version of us!"). And so, Reed has resorted to the unspecific "apology" for poor judgment, in an attempt to lay the whole saga to rest.

But unfortunately for Reed, his Abramoff problem is giving his many political enemies in Georgia a lot of ammunition. It's bad enough that the state's leading newspaper, The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, is providing consistent and original coverage of the scandal. (*AJC* reporters Jim Galloway and Tom Baxter recently scored a scoop by examining documents released in the Enron trial, and discovering that Reed, whose firm represented Enron, had gone to considerable trouble to hook up the famous corporate outlaws with Abramoff's services in Washington.) But Reed also has a primary opponent, state senator Casey Cagle, whose campaign is increasingly based on the argument that Reed's presence on the ticket this November could produce a massive Republican defeat.

Cagle is having no trouble feeding on old Republican resentments of Reed. Last year Cagle supporter Bob Irvin, the former Georgia House Republican leader and a former state party chair, published an op-ed in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* unsubtly reminding Republicans of Reed's role in the disastrous 1998 campaign. But Reed is the object of a deeper, and less publicized, scorn, according to Georgia Republican insiders. During his apparently triumphant 2002 stint as state party chairman, Reed used his position to tilt GOP spending towards the national party's priority of defeating U.S. senator Max Cleland, and away from the presumably doomed gubernatorial campaign of Sonny Perdue. When Perdue won and became Georgia's Republican potentate, he quickly, if quietly, showed Reed the door as party chairman.

Reed's shallow roots and bad rep in Georgia Republican circles are reflected in the unusual and persistent demand of Cagle's supporters that Ralph withdraw from the race (most recently 21 Republican state senators published an open letter urging just that). A recent independent poll showed Reed losing to a generic Democrat (two former state legislators from the Atlanta area, Greg Hecht and Jim Martin, are in the race), and Republicans are increasingly nervous that nominating Reed could nationalize the entire Georgia election and make it easy for Democrats to raise money countrywide to counter Reed's war chest

Those who trespass against us

Perhaps the most interesting question is whether Reed's old Christian conservative friends will abandon him. There has always been an undertone of concern in these circles about his willingness to place partisan affiliation and even personal status above the passionate substantive interests of cultural conservatives. Outside the Christian Coalition, Reed has often been accused of divided loyalties, at best. And while conservative religious leaders have so far limited their grievances to whispering, rumors are rampant that major conservative evangelical figures in Georgia will soon come out against him.

An early sign of this displeasure came in January, when the Georgia Christian Coalition held its annual meeting in an Atlanta suburb. The event functions as an unofficial straw poll and was clearly a gut-check for the Reed campaign; the former boss was expected to do well, he *had* to do well. In fact, Reed and his advisors were so concerned about making a good showing that they sent an email out to supporters the week before, offering to pay the $20 fee for the event and to foot the bill for hotel rooms for their out-of-town partisans. This extraordinary effort still produced no more than a draw—observers counted an equal number of Reed and Cagle t-shirts at the event.

Even so, Reed has managed to maintain support from much of the statewide Republican establishment, with the exception of Cagle's legislative base and despite the thinly-veiled hostility of the governor's office. Before the Abramoff scandal broke, Reed was riding so high that he was able to intimidate a potential primary opponent—state insurance commissioner John Oxendine—into withdrawing from the race, even though he led in the polls. Since then, however, Reed's fundraising has declined, national GOP figures are no longer embracing him, and a smell of death is beginning to envelop his campaign.

It goes without saying that if Reed gets indicted as part of a federal criminal-justice action against Abramoff and his associates, he is political toast. And, as the *Texas Observer* has reported, he must also worry about the possibility of being prosecuted in Texas for unregistered lobbying on behalf of the gambling-fed anti-gambling cause.

In any event, if Reed does go down—in the primary or the general election—it will be a fatal blow to a candidate who was aiming far higher than the relatively powerless office of lieutenant governor of Georgia. But more importantly, it will mean the conservative coalition Reed helped found is crumbling, and it will establish that the Abramoff scandal, and all it represents, has real consequences for those who play the game without a rulebook. ◆

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Everyday Low Vices

How much should we hate Wal-Mart?

By T. A. Frank

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In the late 1940s, when Sam Walton was franchising a Ben Franklin's variety store in Newport, Ark., he had a simple but momentous idea. Like any retailer, Walton was always looking for deals from suppliers. Typically, though, a retailer who managed to get a bargain from a wholesaler would leave his store prices unchanged and pocket the extra money. Walton, by contrast, realized he could do better by passing on the savings to his customers and earning his profits through volume. This insight would form a cornerstone of Walton's business strategy when he launched Wal-Mart in 1962.

The quest for low prices came naturally to Walton: He was freakishly cheap. Although he was ranked as the richest man in the United States by the 1980s, he continued, it is said, to have his hair cut by the local barber, a $5 expense that he never supplemented with a tip. (Perhaps he wasn't satisfied.) Cost-cutting was, as one might also expect, an obsession in the Wal-Mart culture, and Walton was almost as chintzy with his executives as he was with his cashiers. On business trips, everyone, including the boss, flew coach, and hotel rooms were always shared. Even a cup of coffee at the office required a 10-cent contribution to the tin.

But coffee taxes only went so far. Walton understood that a major requirement for keeping costs down was controlling the payroll. As he would write in his 1992 autobiography, *Made in America*, "No matter how you slice it in the retail business, payroll is one of the most important parts of overhead, and overhead is one of the most crucial things you have to fight to maintain your profit margin." Not only did Walton prefer to hire as few people as possible, but he also dreaded paying them more than he had to. Unions were particularly feared, and Walton did everything he could to fight them, almost always successfully.

If such a regimen seems stifling, Walton's employees nevertheless accepted it. In part, it was because Walton framed his cheapness as a crusade on behalf of the lowly consumer and as a quest for a better life for all Americans. It was also because he lived an outwardly modest life, driving an old truck with his hunting dogs in the back. Mostly, it was because he had charisma. Even when Wal-Mart grew outsized, Walton made a point of keeping in touch with his employees on the ground or, as he termed them, his "associates." This would often involve flying from store to store—Walton had a pilot's license—for impromptu visits.

But Walton's ability to keep his staff happy also relied on a sense of when to let penny-pinching take a backseat to other priorities. In 1985, amid anxiety about trade deficits and the loss of American manufacturing jobs, Walton launched a "Made in America" campaign that committed Wal-Mart to buying American-made products if suppliers could get within 5 percent of the price of a foreign competitor. This may have compromised the bottom line in the short term, but Walton understood the long-term benefit of convincing employees and customers that the company had a conscience as well as a calculator. He also made sure to give his staff a stake in the company. In 1971, he introduced a profit-sharing plan that allowed employees to put a certain percentage of their wages towards the purchase of subsidized Wal-Mart stock. For employees who stuck around, this could mean quite a bit of money. According to a truck driver named Bob Clark, quoted in Walton's autobiography: "[Walton] said, 'If you'll just stay with me for twenty years, I guarantee you'll have $100,000 in profit sharing'...Well, last time I checked, I had $707,000 in profit sharing, and I see no reason why it won't go up again."

Equally important was Walton's ability to sell employees on the notion that working at Wal-Mart meant limitless opportunity. Here, from *Fortune*, is a portrait of Walton at a Saturday-morning meeting in 1989:

T.A. Frank is a writer in Los Angeles.

Getty Images

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[Walton] proposes that whenever customers approach, the associates should look them in the eye, greet them, and ask to help. Sam understands that some associates are shy, but if they do what he suggests, "It would, I'm sure, help you become a leader, it would help your personality develop, you would become more outgoing, and in time you might become manager of that store, you might become a department manager, you might become a district manager, or whatever you choose to be in the company...It will do wonders for you." He guarantees it.

And things could get downright cultish:

Then, just to make sure, Sam asks the associates to raise their right hands and execute a pledge, keeping in mind that "a promise we make is a promise we keep." The pledge: "From this day forward, I solemnly promise and declare that every customer that comes within ten feet of me, I will smile, look them in the eye, and greet them, so help me Sam."

Of course, Wal-Mart's success relied on more than just charisma and thrift. Technology, in particular, put the company ahead of its competitors. Already by the 1970s, Wal-Mart was using computers to link its stores and warehouses. Sales data allowed Wal-Mart to keep track of specific items and reduce inventory miscalculations. Only years later would Kmart realize how far it had fallen behind. Throughout Walton's career, a focus on innovation of this sort would make Wal-Mart a consistent leader in efficiency.

When Walton died in 1992, the adjustment to a post-Sam environment proved difficult. Although Wal-Mart executives had emphasized for years that their company depended on a set of principles and habits more than it did on any one person, Walton's death wound up marking a fateful shift in how the company was perceived.

The first blow fell only months later when "Dateline NBC" produced an exposé on the company's sourcing practices. Although Wal-Mart's "Made in America" campaign was still nominally in effect, "Dateline" showed that store-level associates had posted "Made in America" signs over merchandise actually produced in far away sweatshops. This sort of exposure was new to a company that had been a press darling for many years, and Wal-Mart's stock immediately declined by 3 percent. While the "Dateline" flap was short-lived, Wall Street soon found other reasons to lose faith in the company. Profit margins were declining, yet David Glass, who was Wal-Mart's CEO at the time, chose to make ambitious investments in distribution, technology, and construction. Such risk-taking, while smart, scared off investors at the time, and, by 1996, *Fortune* was even mocking the company's "everyday low stock prices." It was no longer the feisty little chain out of Bentonville.

But it wasn't just Wal-Mart's image that began to change after Walton's death. It was also the way the company did business. Wal-Mart's new leaders took to heart one element of the founder's business philosophy—the importance of reducing costs—but they didn't show his intuition about the importance of making employees feel as though they had a stake in the company. They were already at a disadvantage as it was. Wal-Mart's rate of growth was impressive but slower than in its early years—the inevitable result of becoming so big—and this weakened the appeal of such incentives as stock ownership. But character also played a role. The company's focus on saving money was leading it to make unrealistic demands of local managers, particularly with regard to payroll, and this pressure would eventually lead to serious trouble.

For a while, though, it worked. Between 1997 and 2001, the company's stock value increased by over 500 percent, rising by 70 percent in 1997 alone. This undoubtedly helped to mollify employees who'd been unhappy with the slump earlier in the decade. Between 1996 and 1999, sales increased by 78 percent while inventory rose only 24 percent, a feat *Fortune* lauded as "mind-bending." Today, with $288 billion in annual revenues (more than Switzerland's GDP) and over $10 billion in profits, Wal-Mart is the world's largest corporation, according to 2005 *Fortune 500* list. It operates over 5,000 stores worldwide and employs over 1.6 million people— 1.3 million in the United States alone.

That growth has been accompanied by two distinct kinds of perceptions among the public. On the one hand, Wal-Mart has been celebrated for its business innovations, which have set a new global standard for efficiency. On the other, it has been condemned for its hard-charging business practices. One of the most prominent attacks came last November, when filmmaker Robert Greenwald released *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, a documentary that excoriated the company for its approach to unions, independent retailers, outsourcing, and wages and benefits.

Washington, too, has gotten involved. In 2003, in the run up to the primaries, Democrats began to make an issue of Wal-Mart's wages and benefits. In 2004, Rep. George Miller of California released a report called "Everyday Low Wages: The Hidden Price We All Pay for Wal-Mart." And last year, organized labor put together two Washington-based groups: Wake Up Wal-Mart, backed by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and Wal-Mart Watch, supported by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Staffed by prominent veterans from the campaigns of Howard Dean and Wesley Clark, both groups are devoted to keeping the world, and Washington, informed of Wal-Mart's alleged misdeeds. For many progressives, the fight to change Wal-Mart represents a central organizing challenge for the 21st century.

There's evidence that the bad press has taken a toll on the company. A 2004 report prepared for Wal-Mart by McKinsey and Co. found that up to 8 percent of Wal-Mart customers no longer shop there because of "negative press they have heard." For the last two Christmas shopping seasons, the company has reported lower-than-expected sales. And in January, Maryland gave final approval to a "Wal-Mart bill," requiring large employers to spend at least

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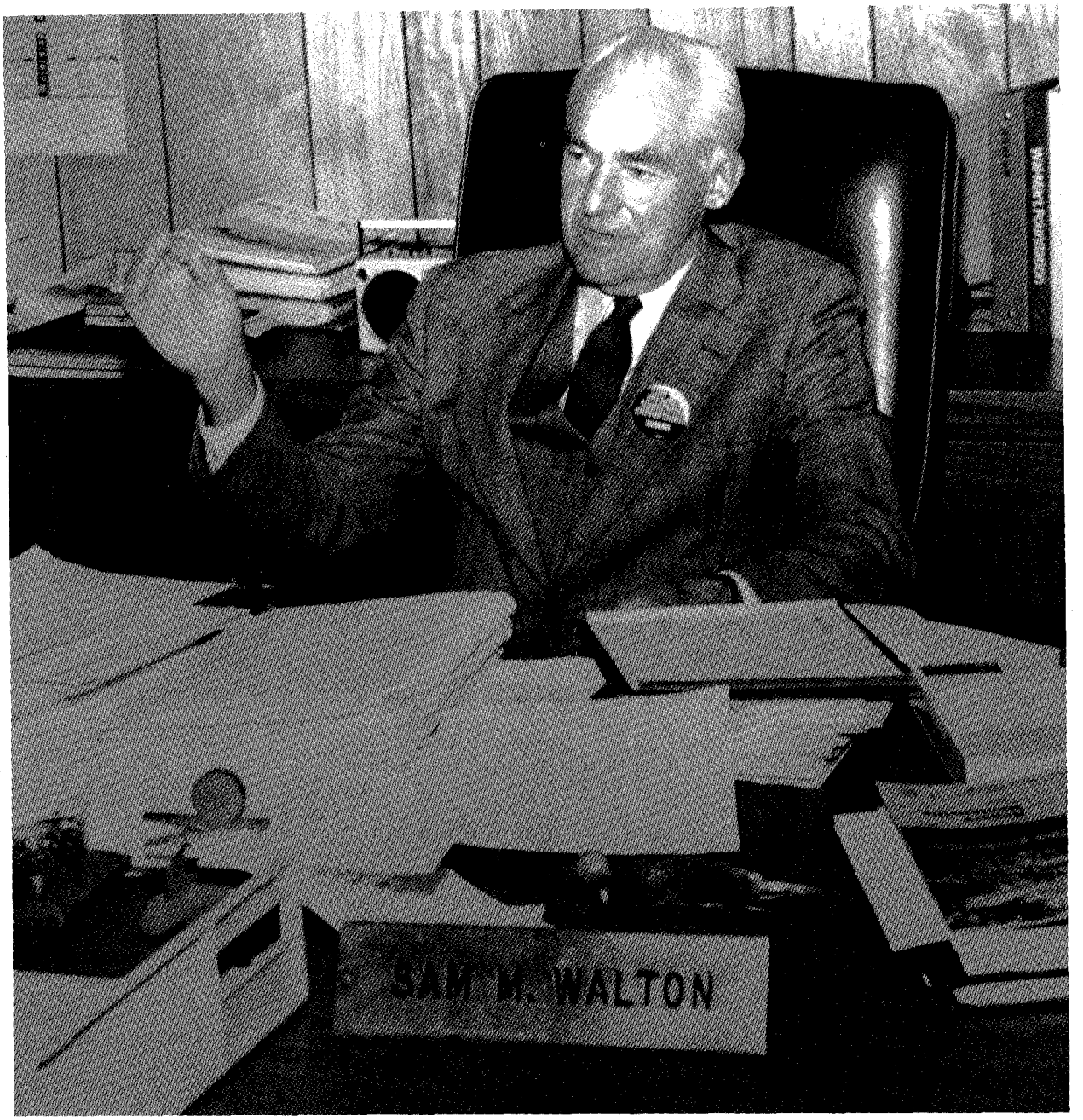

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8 percent of their payroll on health benefits. Thirty other states are now considering similar bills. Developments of this sort have led the company to form a war room of political PR experts from both parties—including Ronald Reagan's image-meister Michael Deaver, and Leslie Dach, a media consultant to Bill Clinton—to generate more positive media coverage.

Wal-Mart's defenders argue that the chain saves lower-income workers billions through its low prices. This is undeniably true, but it's not a virtue unique to Wal-Mart. The entire sector of discount retailers—from Target to Costco to Best Buy to Home Depot—does much the same thing. Meanwhile, Wal-Mart's critics tend to focus on the company's low wages and paltry benefits, or its effect on small towns, or its reliance on outsourcing. But these, too, are by and large sins of the entire discount retail sector. So why pick on Wal-Mart?

The answer is that Wal-Mart really is different. In terms of annual revenue, Wal-Mart is nearly four times the size of The Home Depot, the country's second largest retailer, and almost twice the size of Target, Costco, and Sears (which includes Kmart) combined. That means the company exerts pressure on the entire sector to imitate its methods—including its treatment of workers. That would be less worrisome if Wal-Mart's record didn't stand out within the sector. But there are strong indications that, when it comes to how it treats its employees, Wal-Mart really is worse than the rest. The company finds itself in trouble because, since the death of Sam Walton 14 years ago, something ugly has happened to the way it does business.

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Work off the clock

In a comparison of Wal-Mart with its peers, the obvious place to start would be wages and benefits. But neither Wal-Mart, Target, nor Costco make public their median wage, which many economists argue is the most accurate measure of how a company pays its employees. A 2005 study by Arindrajit Dube and Steve Wertheim of the University of California's Berkeley Labor Center, however, sheds some light. Using figures for Wal-Mart released through a sex-discrimination lawsuit, and relying for the rest of the large retail sector on numbers from the March 2005 "Current Population Survey," the study finds that Wal-Mart pays its hourly workers an average hourly wage of $9.68, while other large retailers average $11.08. (The study adjusts for the fact that Wal-Mart stores tend to be in lower-income areas.) As for health benefits, Dube and Wertheim found that Wal-Mart offers its hourly workers benefits worth 73 cents per hour, while other large retailers offer $1.

The study suggests that Wal-Mart is significantly less generous than other large retailers. In response, Wal-Mart has noted that the Berkeley Labor Center receives 10 percent of its funds from organized labor. The company instead cites a study that it commissioned from the consulting group Global Insight, which found that Wal-Mart's wages are on par with those of other retailers. But whichever study comes closer to the truth, comparisons between Wal-Mart and the large retail sector as a whole don't tell the full story. After all, discount retailers like Wal-Mart will inevitably pay less than many other large retailers, and why shouldn't they? Doing so allows them to offer lower prices. Only by focusing exclusively on other discount retailers like Costco and Target can we meaningfully compare Wal-Mart's wages and benefits to those of its competitors, but we simply lack the hard data on most other outlets to do this.

But there are myriad other ways that employers can cut costs at the expense of workers. And it's in these areas that we can gather more satisfactory information to compare Wal-Mart to its competitors. The simplest way to save money is to avoid paying people for all the hours that they've worked—a practice called off-the-clock work. Of course, Wal-Mart can't explicitly force employees to work off-the-clock. But it can set payroll targets that are nearly impossible to achieve without doing just that. As one manager explained to *The New York Times* in 2002, "You got to hit the payroll budget they set for you, but if you're over, they discipline you." Plausible deniability, then, becomes essential. Workers get assigned more work than they can possibly complete on their shifts—while being warned that overtime is out of the question. No intelligent employee would fail to get the message: Finish the job by whatever means necessary. "We worked off the clock pretty much every shift," one employee told the *Times*. "The manager said if our jobs were not finished, we had to clock out and finish our jobs so no overtime would show up."

Wal-Mart insists that these cases are unrepresentative of the company as a whole, and that any enterprise of their size is bound to have a few rogue managers. But the verdicts so far suggest a widespread problem. In 2000, Wal-Mart paid $50 million to settle an off-the-clock suit involving 69,000 Wal-Mart employees in Colorado. Two years later, a federal jury ordered Wal-Mart to pay back wages to 83 workers in Oregon for off-the-clock work. Some 40 similar class actions are pending, and in 2002, *The New York Times* reported on a "wide-ranging legal battle between Wal-Mart and employees or former employees in 28 states" over off-the-clock work. Last December, a

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California jury awarded $172 million to thousands of Wal-Mart employees who had been illegally denied lunch breaks.

Free-market advocates who defend the company argue that squeezing workers is an unavoidable reality of the discount retail business. But a look at the annual reports of Wal-Mart and its competitors points up a glaring difference between the companies. Target's and Costco's annual reports for 2004-2005 include no cases of off-the-clock work. Wal-Mart's lists 44:

> Wage and Hour "Off the Clock" Class Actions: Adcox v. WM, US Dist. Ct. ("USDC"), Southern Dist. of TX, 11/9/04; Armijo v. WM, 1st Judicial Dist. Ct., Rio Arriba County, NM, 9/18/00; Bailey v. WM, Marion County Superior Ct. IN, 8/17/00; Barnett v. WM, Superior Ct. of WA, King County, 9/10/01; Basco v. WM, USDC, Eastern Dist. of LA, 9/5/00; Braun v. WM, 1st Judicial Dist. Ct. Dakota County MN, 9/12/01; Braun v. WM, Ct. of Common Pleas, Philadelphia County, PA, 3/20/02; Brown v. WM, 14th Judicial Circuit Ct., Rock Island, IL, 6/20/01; Carr v. WM, Superior Ct. of Fulton County, GA, 8/14/01; Culver v. WM, USDC, Dist. of CO, 12/10/1996; Carter v. WM, Ct. of Common Pleas, Colleton County, SC, 7/31/02; Gamble v. WM, Supreme Ct. of the State of NY, County of Albany, 12/7/01; Gross v. WM, Circuit Ct., Laurel County, KY, 9/29/04; Hale v. WM, Circuit Ct., Jackson County, MO, 8/15/01; Hall v. WM, 8th Judicial Dist. Ct.,

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Clark County, NV, 9/9/99; Harrison v. WM, Superior Ct. of Forsyth County, NC, 11/29/00; Holcomb v. WM, State Ct. of Chatham County, GA, 3/28/00; Hummel v. WM, Common Pleas Ct. of Philadelphia County, PA, 8/30/04; Iliadis v. WM, Superior Ct. of NJ, Middlesex County, 5/30/02; Kuhlmann (In Re: Wal-Mart Employee Litigation) v. WM, Circuit Ct., Milwaukee County, WI, 8/30/01; Lerma v. WM, Dist. Ct., Cleveland County, OK, 8/31/01; Lopez v. WM, 23rd Judicial Dist. Ct. of Brazoria County, TX, 6/23/00; Mendoza v. WM, Superior Ct. of CA, Ventura County, 3/2/04; Michell v. WM, USDC, Eastern Dist. of TX, Marshall Div., 9/13/02; Montgomery v. WM, USDC, Southern Dist. of MS, 12/30/02; Mussman v. WM, IA Dist. Ct., Clinton County, 6/5/01; Nagy v. WM, Circuit Ct. of Boyd County, KY, 8/29/01; Newland v. WM, Superior Ct. of CA, Alameda County, CA, 01/14/05; Osuna v. WM, Superior Ct. of AZ, Pima County, 11/30/01; Pickett v. WM, Circuit Court, Shelby County, TN, 10/22/03; Pittman v. WM, Circuit Ct. for Prince George's County, MD, 7/31/02; Robinson v. WM, Circuit Ct., Holmes County, MS, 12/30/02; Sago v. WM, Circuit Ct., Holmes County, MS, 12/31/02; Romero v. WM, Superior Ct. of CA, Monterey County, 03/25/04; Salvas v. WM, Superior Ct., Middlesex County, MA, 8/21/01; Sarda v. WM, Circuit Ct., Washington County, FL, 9/21/01; Savaglio v. WM, Superior Ct. of CA, Alameda County, 2/6/01; Scott v. WM, Circuit Ct. of Saginaw County, MI, 9/26/01; Smith v. WM, Circuit Ct., Holmes County, MS, 12/31/02; Thiebes v. WM, USDC, Dist. of OR, 6/30/98; Willey v. WM, Dist. Ct. of Wyandotte County, KS, 9/21/01; Williams v. WM, Superior Ct. of CA, Alameda County, 3/23/04; Wilson v. WM, Common Pleas Ct. of Butler County, OH, 10/27/03; Winters v. WM, Circuit Ct., Holmes County, MS, 5/28/02.

No girls allowed

In 1986, Walton was sensing some pressure to appoint a woman to Wal-Mart's all-male board. So he offered the job to Arkansas' first lady, one Hillary Clinton, who accepted. She would later quote Walton's pitch: "I think I need a woman; would you like to be her?" Today, Wal-Mart's challenges in the field of gender equality are not so easily addressed. The company keeps its payroll costs down by paying women less than their male counterparts for performing the same work. Evidence also exists that it fails to promote women at the same rate as men.

In 2000, a female employee at a California Wal-Mart who found herself denied promotions filed a sex-discrimination suit. That case now involves nearly two million women, and, in 2004, it was certified by Judge Martin J. Jenkins, of the United States District Court in San Francisco as a class action. Discrimination is a difficult thing to prove, but the figures in the case do not look good. According to numbers compiled in 2003 by the plaintiffs, female store managers average slightly under $90,000 in annual income, while their male counterparts average slightly over $100,000. And while women make up 79 percent of the store's department heads (an hourly position), only 15.5 percent are store managers. Judge Jenkins offered a strongly-worded assessment of the evidence:

"Plaintiffs present largely uncontested descriptive statistics which show that women working at Wal-Mart stores are paid less than men in every region, that pay disparities exist in most job categories, that the salary gap widens over time, that women take longer to enter management positions, and that the higher one looks in the organization the lower the percentage of women."

Wal-Mart has argued that most of the decisions about hiring and promotion are decentralized. The plaintiffs contend, however, that a company in which headquarters chooses to regulate certain regional minutiae, such as individual store temperatures, also has the capacity to keep an eye on gender issues.

But is Wal-Mart really any different from its competitors when it comes to treating its female employees fairly? An extensive search of cases against Target doesn't turn up any similar accusations, and while Costco does face a gender discrimination class action, it involves hundreds of women, not millions. Brad Seligman, who is lead counsel on the gender discrimination cases against both Wal-Mart and Costco, stresses that, even accounting for differences in size, Wal-Mart is exceptional. "I'm the first to concede that the Costco case is nowhere in the same league as the Wal-Mart case," says Seligman. "I've done 50 class actions in my time, and Wal-Mart stands out above all of them, both in terms of the depth and pattern of discrimination and in their reaction to the charges."

We care, but not that much

Few discount retailers make it easy for workers to unionize. But it's hard to find one that has been more aggressive, brutal, and openly hostile to unions than Wal-Mart. Sam Walton faced his first major union challenge in the 1960s. Two Wal-Marts in Missouri were on the verge of organizing, and Walton called in a lawyer named John Tate to stop them. In 1989, Tate, by then an executive vice president of the company, described the events to *Fortune*: "I told [Walton], 'You can approach this one of two ways: hold people down, and pay me or some other lawyer to make it work. Or devote time and attention to proving to people that you care.'" Walton soon followed up with a management seminar called "We Care," began to call employees "associates," and introduced a widely-praised profit-sharing plan. Whether satisfaction or fear was at play, no union ever formed.

Since Walton's death, however, the "hold people down and pay me or some other lawyer to make it work" method appears to have gained favor. In 2000, when workers in a Jacksonville, Texas, meat-cutting department successfully voted to unionize, Wal-Mart announced two

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weeks later that it would be closing its meat-cutting departments nationwide and switching to pre-cut meat. Four of the employees who voted in favor of the union were fired. (The company claims that the timing was coincidental and that the dismissals were unrelated, but a National Labor Relations Board judge disagreed. Wal-Mart is appealing the case.) A year ago, employees at a Wal-Mart tire and lube shop thought they had enough votes to unionize, but the company fired one of the likely yes-voters and transferred in six likely no-voters. Again, an administrative judge ruled that Wal-Mart's conduct had been illegal, but the goal of blocking the union had been achieved. And in February 2005, the company announced that it would be closing a Wal-Mart in Quebec, one of only two unionized Wal-Marts in North America (the other is also in Quebec). Wal-Mart claimed the store was losing money, but it refused to release numbers.

Wal-Mart's strong-arm approach is the product of a simple cost-benefit analysis. As Thomas Cochan, a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, explains, "we have a law that is no longer serving its basic objective of providing people with the ability to organize. The incentives are too weak to keep companies from violating the law if they don't want to comply." The National Labor Relations Board can order an employer to rehire a terminated employee and to pay back wages, but it can't impose criminal penalties or punitive damages. This is rather like telling a bank robber that the penalty for a failed heist is being required to return the money to the bank. And Wal-Mart takes full advantage of such laxity. Store managers are equipped with 56-page pamphlets titled "The Manager's Toolbox to Remaining Union Free," and representatives from the "People Division" in Bentonville are flown out at a moment's notice if there are any signs of union activity. According to a 2004 report in *The Nation*, stores even administer personality tests to applicants to screen out potential union sympathizers.

Although Target and Kmart both take pains to head off workers who might organize a union—Costco, by contrast, has some unionized employees—Wal-Mart still leads the competition. Over the past 10 years, the NLRB or its administrative law judges have determined in at least 11 cases that Wal-Mart or individual Wal-Mart stores were engaging in unfair labor practices to prevent unionization, according to the agency's website. In that same period, both Target's and Costco's records appear to have remained clean. An excerpt from one of the decisions against Wal-Mart gives a sense of the extent of the violations:

The Respondent, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., its officers, agents, successors, and assigns, shall

1. Cease and desist from

(a) Promising to remedy employee concerns in an effort to undermine support for the Union.

(b) Removing supervisors from their position in an effort to undermine support for the Union.

(c) Engaging in surveillance of the union activities of employees.

(d) Coercively interrogating employees concerning the union sympathies and support of other employees.

(e) Installing new equipment to remedy employee complaints in order to undermine support for the Union.

(f) Transferring employees into the TLE [Tire Lube and Express division] to dilute the support for the Union.

(g) Transferring employees into the TLE to remedy employee complaints about inadequate staffing in order to undermine support for the Union.

(h) Transferring employees out of the TLE in order to dilute the support for the Union.

The post-Sam era

"Sam would have been proud" is the highest tribute that can be paid at the company Walton left behind. Increasingly, though, it's also clear that what the writer Barbara Ehrenreich termed the "Cult of Sam" has played a large role in its current woes. Walton, in his day, played a hard game, but he knew when to hold back. Unions were fiercely resisted, but employees were treated respectfully. Wages were low, but people were made to feel they had a stake in the company. Bargaining with suppliers would be tough, but some holds would be barred. Walton's instincts, in short, helped to keep the company's foibles in check. Absent Walton, the redeeming features of Wal-Mart began to disappear. What remained were the relentlessness, the chauvinism, and, above all, the cheapness. As so often happens, the leader wasn't doctrinaire; but the followers are. A *Fortune* article from 2003 notes how, at Wal-Mart headquarters, "nothing backs up a point better than a quotation from Walton scripture."

It won't be easy for Wal-Mart to change its ways. Wake Up Wal-Mart likes to point out that Wal-Mart could raise its average wages by two dollars an hour if it raised prices by only a penny on the dollar. But Wal-Mart is led by people whose lives are devoted to coming up with ways to shave a penny—or a half penny, or a quarter penny—off of a dollar. Wal-Mart's chief spokesman summed up the difficulty in an interview with *The New York Times*. Change might be necessary, he admitted, but, "at the same time, we can't change who we are—we can't change what makes Wal-Mart Wal-Mart."

But they may have to. Union-busting, gender discrimination, and off-the-clock work aren't innovative; they're illegal. And there are signs that the company is beginning to recognize the need for change. In a message to company managers posted on Wal-Mart's internal website and published by *The New York Times* in February, CEO Lee Scott wrote: "If you choose to do the wrong thing . . . if you choose to take a shortcut on payroll, if you choose to take a shortcut on a raise for someone, you hurt this company. And it's not unlikely in today's environment that your shortcut is going to end up on the front page of the newspaper." With any luck, Wal-Mart will work through its identity crisis and produce a company that's a model for the industry. With even more luck, Americans will begin a thoughtful debate about balancing our needs as consumers and our needs as producers. Until then, we can focus on getting Wal-Mart employers to abide by the laws we have. In many instances, that alone would be a significant improvement. ◆

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The Framers and the Faithful

How modern evangelicals are ignoring their own history.

By Steven Waldman

Thomas Jefferson stood, dressed in a black suit, in a doorway of the White House on Jan. 1, 1802, watching a bizarre spectacle. Two horses were pulling a dray carrying a 1,235-pound cheese—just for him. Measuring 4 feet in diameter and 17 inches in height, this cheese was the work of 900 cows.

More impressive than the size of the cheese was its eloquence. Painted on the red crust was the inscription: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." The cheese was a gift from religious leaders in western Massachusetts.

It may seem surprising that religious leaders would be praising Jefferson, given that his critics had just months earlier been attacking him as an infidel and an atheist. In the 1800 election, John Adams had argued that the Francophile Jefferson would destroy America's Christian heritage just as the French revolutionaries had undermined their own religious legacy. Adams supporters quoted Jefferson's line that he didn't care whether someone believed in one god or 20, and they argued that the choice in the election was: "God—And a religious president...[or] Jefferson—and no God."

But in a modern context, the most remarkable thing about the cheese is that it came from evangelical Christians. It was the brainchild of the Rev. John Leland—a Baptist and, therefore, a theological forefather of the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Franklin Graham. Even though Jefferson was labeled anti-religion by some, he had become a hero to evangelicals—not in spite of his views on separation of church and state, but because of them. By this point, Jefferson had written his draft of the Virginia statute of religious freedom, and he and James Madison were known as the strictest proponents of keeping government and religion far apart. Because Baptists and other evangelicals had been persecuted and harassed by the majority faiths—the Anglicans in the South and the Puritan-influenced Congregationalists in the North—these religious minorities had concluded that their freedom would only be guaranteed when majority faiths could not use the power of the state to promote their theology and institutions.

Each side of our modern culture wars has attempted to appropriate the Founding Fathers for their own purposes. With everything from prayer in school to gay rights to courtroom displays of the Ten Commandments at stake, conservative and liberal activists are trying to capture the middle ground and win over public opinion. Portraying their views as compatible with—even demanded by—the Founding Fathers makes any view seem more sensible, mainstream, and in the American tradition. And in truth, you can find a Jefferson or Adams quote to buttress just about any argument. But there are a few facts that might actually be stipulated by both sides in the culture wars. First, the original Constitution really didn't say all that much about religion. God is not mentioned, and the only reference to religion is a ban on providing religious tests for holding office. (Ask why, and the arguments would resume with fury: Conservatives say the Founders left it out because they wanted the states to regulate religion; liberals say it was because the framers were secularists who wanted strict separation between religion and government).

Second, there was a widespread view among religious people of all flavors that the Constitution would be much stronger if it had a Bill of Rights that more explicitly guaranteed religious freedom. The 18th-century evangelicals were among the strongest advocates of this view and of the Bill of Rights, which declared that "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion." Throughout the states, evangelicals pushed hard for ratification of the Bill of Rights in the state legislatures. Indeed, part of what made Jefferson cheese-worthy in the eyes of a Baptist leader like Leland was his advocacy of a Bill of Rights.

Modern Christian conservatives concede that point and hail the First Amendment, but they argue that it by

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no means follows that either the Founders or the proto-evangelicals wanted a strict separation of church and state. They point out—accurately—that neither the Constitution nor the Bill of Rights includes the phrase "separation of church and state." And they argue that what the First Amendment intended to do was exactly what it says—and no more: prevent the "establishment" of an official state church, like the ones that had been prevalent in the colonies up until the time of the revolution. In the book *The Myth of the Separation*, religious conservative David Barton argues that the Founders simply did not support separation of church and state. Indeed, he maintains, this was a Christian nation founded by Christian men who very much wanted the government to support religion. The contemporary intellectual battle over the role of religion in the public square will be determined in part on who can own the history.

It is ironic, then, that evangelicals—so focused on the "true" history—have neglected their own. Indeed, the one group that would almost certainly oppose the views of 21st-century evangelicals are the 18th-century evangelicals. John Leland was no anomaly. In state after state, when colonists and Americans met to debate the relationship between God and government, it was the proto-evangelicals who pushed the more radical view that church and state should be kept far apart. Both secular liberals who sneer at the idea that evangelicals could ever be a positive influence in politics and Christian conservatives who want to knock down the "wall" should take note: It was the 18th-century evangelicals who provided the political shock troops for Jefferson and Madison in their efforts to keep government from strong involvement with religion. Modern evangelicals are certainly free to take a different course, but they should realize that in doing so they have dramatically departed from the tradition of their spiritual forefathers.

New light

To understand why, we need to go back to the period known as the Great Awakening, a spiritual movement of the 1730s and 1740s that challenged the style and theology of the existing churches. The dramatic wave of revivalism started in New Jersey and western Massachusetts, where ministers such as Gilbert Tennent and Jonathan Edwards preached about the importance of personal born-again experiences. These isolated revivals became a mass movement with the arrival in the fall of 1739 of an English preacher named George Whitefield. A friend of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, Whitefield had developed a following after writing about his conversion experiences and travels from depravity to salvation. He was described as handsome, yet one of his eyes was crossed inward, a sign, some said, of a divine mark. His voice was powerful, almost hypnotic. He attacked the Church of England for its lethargy and lack of emphasis on the simple message that only God's mercy keeps us from damnation. Churches banned him from their pews, so he went into the fields, where he drew worshippers by the thousands.

Whitefield was what we would now call an evangelical. "None but such as have a living faith in Jesus Christ, and are truly born again, can possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven," he declared. Like modern evangelists, Whitefield used the latest media innovations to spread the gospel far and wide. In his case, that meant tapping into a burgeoning network of newspapers that had sprung up in the colonies—one of the most important being the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, a small publication purchased by Benjamin Franklin in 1729. For six months before Whitefield's arrival, the *Gazette* had printed dispatches about his preaching in England—the 20,000 who showed up at Kensington Common, or the time he delivered a sermon on a tombstone, or how he used tree limbs as pews. Once Whitefield arrived, Franklin offered saturation coverage of his every move, the huge crowds in Charleston and Wilmington, and the money he was raising for an orphanage in Georgia.

Franklin strongly disagreed with Whitefield's central message. A strict Calvinist, Whitefield believed that good behavior could not get us into heaven; Franklin, self-described Deist, did. But there was much about Whitefield, and the evangelicals, that Franklin liked. Whitefield relentlessly attacked the established clergy not only for its stodginess, but also for its lackadaisical attitudes toward moral evils. He denounced mistreatment of slaves, endorsed education for blacks, and established several charities. Because he was preaching in open fields, he drew people from a variety of denominations, classes, and even races.

When local clergy stopped giving Whitefield a place to speak, Franklin helped build a new hall for him—and for clergy of any other religion. Franklin boasted that it was "expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something to the people at Philadelphia; the design in building not being to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general; so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service." For Franklin, evangelicals represented the democratic spirit railing against authority and insular institutions.

In part for this reason, the Great Awakening transformed the colonial approach to the separation of church and state. Throughout the colonies, churches divided into "Old Lights" and "New Lights," with the latter group tending to oppose the established churches more vigorously. As the years proceeded, the Church of England and the official churches became closely linked in the public mind with royal tyranny in general. For the New Lights, opposition to the official church became opposition to English rule, and vice versa.

This idea, seeded by the Great Awakening, was revolutionary in itself. Most of Europe had for centuries

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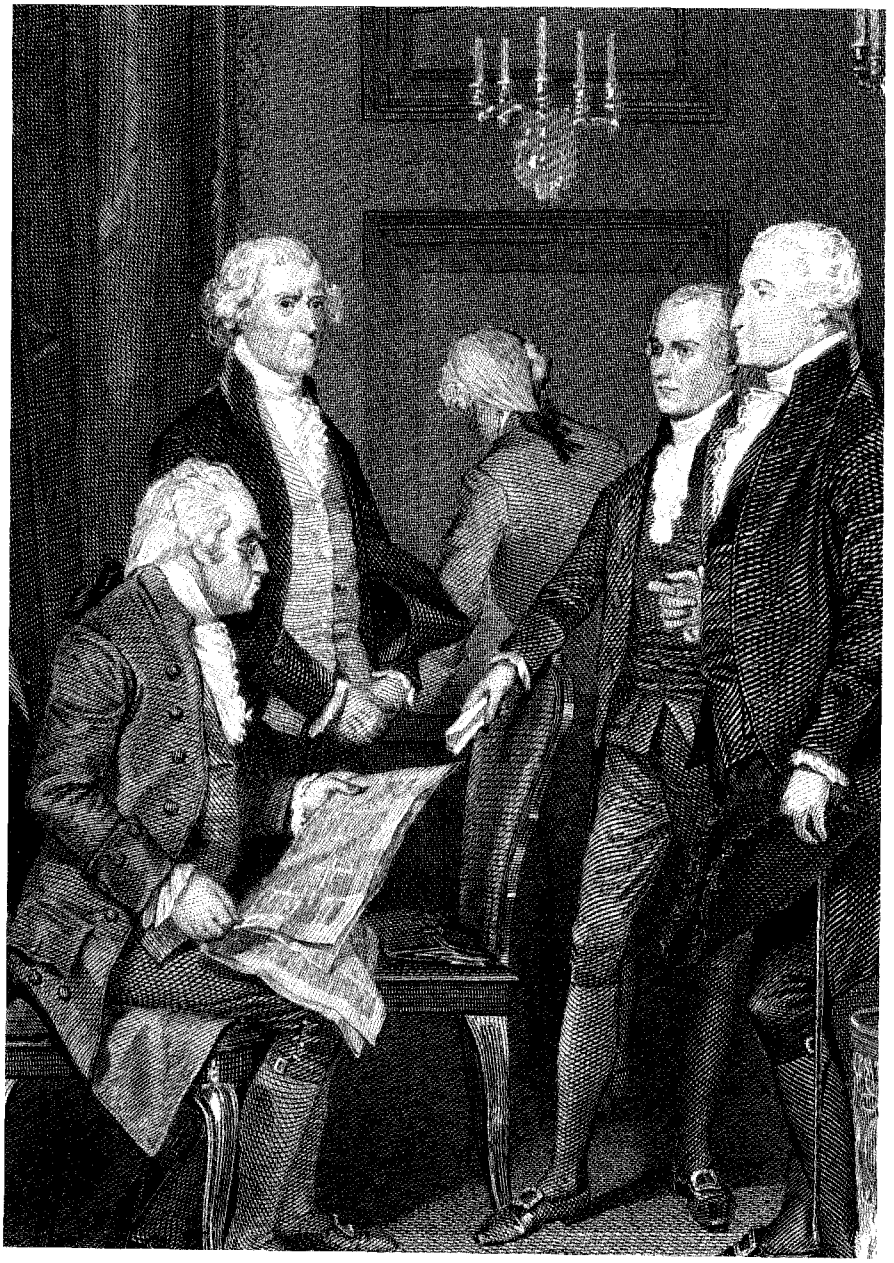

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operated under the theory that the state took its authority from God. It had both the responsibility and right to intervene in religious matters. Conversely, the religious institutions tended to rely on the state to help enforce its doctrine. More important, most of the colonies had imported the idea that an official "established" church was an absolute necessity for promoting religion. In the South, it was the Anglican church, while in the North, the Puritan-influenced Congregationalist church was dominant. In both cases, there was a broad acceptance among the colonial elites of the idea that established churches were traditional and sensible. By equating political and religious persecution, the evangelicals helped lay the foundation for a radical political shift in the colonies.

One of the fastest growing of the evangelical groups was the Baptists, the current heart of the "religious right." As the Baptist influence grew, so did the Anglican backlash against it. In May 1771, an Anglican minister and a sheriff interrupted one Baptist preacher's hymn-singing, put a horsewhip in his mouth and dragged him away from the meeting to be whipped in a nearby field. In Virginia, four Baptist preachers were imprisoned for their emotional sermons. "These men are great disturbers of the peace, they cannot meet a man upon the road but they must ram a text of scripture down his throat," said a lawyer who argued the case against them. They refused to stop preaching and were sent to jail, singing hymns along the way. They preached to crowds through the barred windows of the jail.

As a result of this persecution, the evangelicals were strong supporters of revolution, believing that their fight for religious freedom would rise or fall with the war against political tyranny. After the revolution, they pressed their opposition to the official church establishments and their support for separation of church and state.

The first faith-based initiative

Historians on both sides of the modern culture wars have attempted to study the writing and passage of the First Amendment looking for clues about the Founders's intent. But to understand the role of broader public opinion, there's much more to be learned from the individual state fights over religious freedom. Right before the Declaration of Independence and for two decades after, state legislatures grappled with church-state issues with much greater specificity than the federal constitutional convention had. These battles were fought not only with a few elites in a committee room but also among a broad range of local landowners, merchants, and churchgoers. One of the most significant of these battles took place in Virginia.

After the revolution, there was a sense throughout the state that religion was in decline: Churches were struggling, and immorality was on the rise. Leaders of the dominant Anglican Church –which had turned into

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today's Episcopal Church—began pressing for state support of religion.

In 1784, Patrick Henry, the most popular leader in the state, campaigned for a law that would tax Virginians to support the promotion of Christianity. It is important to realize that Henry was not pushing to create a formal establishment of the Anglican church, and obviously Henry was no Royalist. He was taking the far more liberal view that religion in general should be aided. Under his proposal, voters could designate the denomination, or even the specific church, that their tax dollars would fund. Baptists could give money to the Baptist Church, and Presbyterians to their own church. Henry's bill even went so far as to provide that those who didn't want to support religion could have the option of targeting their tax dollars toward education in general.

The measure, "A Bill for Establishing a Provision for the Teachers of the Christian Religion," gained wide support. It was viewed as a gentle and flexible approach to encouraging religion—surely an important goal—while remaining consistent with the spirit of the revolution. Richard Henry Lee declared that "avarice is accomplishing the destruction of religion for want of legal obligation to contribute something to its support." A petition sent in by citizens in Amelia, Va., declared that "As every Man in the state partakes of the Blessings of Peace and Order" —and peace and order flow directly from the morality produced by religion—"every Man should be obliged to contribute as well to the Support of Religion." Even George Washington supported the approach.

One major Virginia leader stood in opposition to Henry and this popular proposal: James Madison. Though not as well known as Henry, Madison had just played the central role in the constitutional convention and had growing influence within the legislature. He fervently believed that even though the assessment did not create a religious establishment, it posed a severe threat to religious freedom.

On Nov. 11, 1784, the tall, charismatic Patrick Henry and the frail, brainy James Madison faced off in the legislature. Henry argued that nations that had neglected religion had suffered and declined. Madison tried to counter by pointing out lands where religion had flourished without government support.

Madison lost. By a vote of 47 to 32, the legislature voted for a resolution declaring that the people of the Commonwealth "ought to pay a moderate tax or contribution annually for the support of the Christian religion."

During a legislative hiatus that followed, Madison tried to turn public opinion by writing one of the most important documents in the history of American religious freedom, the "Memorial and Remonstrance." He asserted that even though the assessment would support Christianity in general—and that taxpayers could even designate which church they wanted their money to aid—it still was akin to an "establishment."

"Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?" he asked. The bill, he said, was "an offense against God," and previous efforts throughout history to provide financial support for religion had backfired. "During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution."

Madison's paper was circulated widely throughout the state. He went from town to town arguing on its behalf, and at one point stopped by the home of John Leland, the Baptist leader who had earlier sent the cheese to Jefferson.

What soon became clear is that Madison did have allies in his radical view that even the gentle assessment constituted a threat to religious freedom: the evangelical Christians.

"This scheme should it take place is the best calculated to destroy Religion," declared one petition from evangelical Presbyterians in Rockbridge. "We shall be more likely to have the State swarming with Fools, Sots and Gamblers than with a Sober Sensible and Exemplary Clergy." A Baptist group in Duputy pointed out that because money would pass through the tax system the "Sheriffs, County Courts and public Treasury are all to be employed in the management of money levied for the express purpose of supporting Teachers of the Christian Religion." They added that it was sinful to "compel men to furnish contributions of money to support that Religion which they disbelieve and abhor." The Baptist General Association in Orange, Va., rejected the idea that government aid was necessary to help religion as "founded neither in Scripture, on Reason, on Sound Policy; but is repugnant to each of them."

When the legislators returned to Richmond to vote on the measure, the tide had shifted. "The steps taken throughout the Country to defeat the Gnl Assessment, had produced all the effect that could have been wished," Madison reported. "The table was loaded with petitions and remonstrances from all parts against the interposition of the Legislature in matters of Religion."

It's worth noting that the focus of the evangelical argument against state aid to religion was not merely fear of persecution. After all, the assessment law had made it clear that Baptists could funnel their taxes to Baptist churches. Rather, the evangelicals believed that Christians were to render unto Caesar what was his—that the religious and political spheres were meant, by Jesus, to be separate. One Baptist petition declared "We do...earnestly declare against [the assessment bill] as being contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the bill of rights."

They further argued that the approach ignored an

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The Founding Fathers were divided on separation of church and state, but most of the evangelicals weren't. They overwhelmingly sided with Jefferson and Madison.

important lesson of Christian history, that the greatest flowering of Christianity occurs without government support. "The Blessed author of the Christian Religion, not only maintained and supported his gospel in the world for several Hundred Years, without the aid of Civil Power but against all the Powers of the Earth, the Excellent Purity of its Precepts and the unblamable behaviour of its Ministers made its way thro all opposition," one petition declared. "Nor was it the Better for the church when Constantine the great, first Established Christianity by human Laws. True there was rest from Persecution, but how soon was the Church Over run with Error and Immorality."

With the evangelicals providing the political ground troops, the legislature then went even further, approving Thomas Jefferson's statute on religious freedom. The statute prohibited not only formal establishments, but also the use of government funds to aid any particular religion on the grounds that no man's taxes should be used to support religious beliefs with which he does not agree. "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical."

A similar dynamic developed during the ratification of the Bill of Rights. The evangelicals provided the political muscle for the efforts of Madison and Jefferson, not merely because they wanted to block official churches but because they wanted to keep the spiritual and secular worlds apart. "Religious freedom resulted from an alliance of unlikely partners," writes the eminent historian Frank Lambert in his excellent book *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*. "New Light evangelicals such as Isaac Bachus and John Leland joined forces with Deists and skeptics such as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson to fight for a complete separation of church and state."

The infidel-evangelical alliance

Some religious conservatives today point to a slew of comments and actions from the Founding Fathers indicating their support for an intermingling of religion and state. These are not hard to find—in part for a reason rarely acknowledged by either side in the culture wars: The founders did not agree with one another on how to interpret the First Amendment.

John Adams, Patrick Henry, and others believed the First Amendment really was meant to block the formal establishment of an official church, but allowed much mixing of church and state. For instance, Adams endorsed national days of fasting and prayer and appointment of congressional chaplains. Jefferson and Madison were on the other end of the spectrum, demanding the clearest separation of church and state. As president, Jefferson reversed the practice initiated by Washington and Adams, and refused to have a national day of prayer. Madison agreed. He cited the appointment of chaplains as being a direct violation of the "pure principle of religious freedom," especially given how "strongly guarded as is the separation between Religion & Government in the Constitution of the United States."

Just as the Founding Fathers disagreed, so too did people of faith. Congregationalists and Episcopalians were the chief defenders of state-supported religion and more aligned with the views of Adams and Henry. It was the evangelicals who backed the more radical views of Jefferson and Madison. Leland, for instance, agreed with Jefferson's opposition to congressional chaplains. "If legislatures choose to have a chaplain, for Heaven's sake, let them pay him by contributions, and not out of the public chest," he once wrote. Indeed, as Rabbi James Rudin notes in his new book *The Baptizing of America*, "Leland was even against the Sunday closings of U.S. post offices, feeling this represented government favoritism by officially recognizing the Christian Sabbath."

In other words, the Founding Fathers were divided on separation of church and state—but most of the evangelicals weren't. They overwhelmingly sided with Jefferson and Madison.

On one level, this little-known alliance between Jefferson, Madison, and the evangelicals was pragmatic; for different reasons, they shared similar goals. But the connection went far deeper. When evangelicals smashed ecclesiastical authority—by, say, meeting in the fields without the permission of the local clergy—they were undermining authority in general. They were saying that on a deep spiritual level, salvation came through a direct relationship with God and that the clerical middleman was relatively unimportant. Jefferson and other enlightenment thinkers were glorifying the power of the individual mind to determine the truth—through evidence rather than merely tradition. As the historian Rhys Isaac put it, "Jefferson's system proclaimed individual judgment as sacred, sacred against the pressure of collective coercions; the evangelicals did the same for private conscience."

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Today's Christian conservatives often note that Jefferson's famous line declaring that the first amendment had created "a wall separating church and state" was not in the Constitution but in a private letter. But in that letter, Jefferson was responding to one sent to him by a group of Baptists in Danbury, Conn. We usually read Jefferson's side of that exchange. It's worth re-reading what the Danbury Baptists had to say because it reminds us that for the 18th-century evangelicals, the separation of church and state was not only required by the practicalities of their minority status, but was also demanded by God. "Religions is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals," the Baptists wrote, warning that government "dare not assume the prerogatives of Jehova and make Laws to govern the Kingdom of Christ." Government had no business meddling in the affairs of the soul, where there is only one Ruler.

The original intent

The evangelical wariness of the political world persisted for many of the next 200 years. The creation of the Moral Majority changed that. Angry about court rulings allowing abortion and banning prayer in school, Falwell and others argued that Christians should dive aggressively into the public realm in order to promote Christian values. The election of Ronald Reagan, the emergence of the Christian Coalition, and the enormously important role that religious conservatives played in the election of George W. Bush all seemed to validate that strategy. At this moment in history, the evangelical involvement in politics is so strong—and their advocacy of greater government support for religion so persistent—it's difficult to remember that this view is relatively recent.

What the mainstream media have missed is that this separatist strand of the evangelical movement never went away; it was just defeated and quieted. Look carefully, and the spirit of John Leland can be discerned in some modern evangelicals.

The popular commentator Cal Thomas and the author Ed Dobson, both former officials of the Moral Majority, wrote a courageous book in 1999 called *Blinded by the Might*, arguing that proximity to power had prompted religious conservatives to abandon their principles and distracted them from their religious mission: "We have confused political power with God's power." And the Baptist legacy reappeared after George Bush's election when a number of religious conservatives surprised pundits by suggesting that churches should not accept money from the faith-based initiative. Richard Land, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said that while he hoped Bush's faith-based plan passed, he personally "would not touch the money with the proverbial 10-foot pole." The fears expressed by Thomas, Dobson, and Land were the very same ones that Leland or Bachus would have had: that with government involvement will come government interference. Modern religious conservatives have mostly decided to go along anyway because they felt a greater good—the promotion of President Bush and the general encouragement of religion—outweighed the risks.

That moment of nervousness by some religious conservatives about the faith-based initiatives was largely ignored by the mainstream media because it was a minority opinion among contemporary evangelicals and didn't fit the agreed-upon playbook—the Christian right got Bush elected so surely it must like religious aid—but it indicated that this spirit of John Leland and Isaac Bachus is not entirely dead in the evangelical movement.

A small group of influential evangelical historians have, of late, tried to rebut the notion that the country was founded as a Christian Republic. Mark Noll, George Marsden, and Nathan Hatch, the preeminent evangelical historians, wrote a book called *The Search for Christian America* in which they gently, but firmly, attempted to correct a number of misconceptions that modern religious conservatives have about their own past. "The tragedy is that we come to believe that we are attuned to the wisdom of the ages," they noted, "when in fact the sound we really hear is but an echo of our own voice."

So far these individuals—the ones we might call the Original Intent Evangelicals—have been overshadowed by higher-profile Christian conservative leaders like James Dobson, Pat Robertson, and Charles Colson. These leaders insist that the Founders meant only to block the establishment of an official state religion, not to stop all government support of specific religions. Therefore, they argue, the Constitution should be read to allow vouchers for schools that teach religion, prominent displays of the Ten Commandments in government offices, even open proselytizing by military chaplains. In some cases, they go even further. The GOP-controlled Virginia House of Delegates last year passed a measure that would amend the state constitution—and override language that Jefferson himself had written—to allow prayer and proselytizing on all public property (a Senate panel ultimately killed the measure). And a plank in the 2004 Texas Republican platform declares that "the United States of America is a Christian nation" and disparages "the myth of the separation of church and state."

Contemporary religious conservatives can certainly find quotes from Founding Fathers to support their claims that government should aggressively support religion. They'll have a harder time finding quotes from 18th-century evangelicals. Falwell and company are free to chart a different course from earlier Christians, but they should do so with the knowledge that some very pious evangelical leaders believed this was a dangerous path. When the Rev. Falwell meets his maker, he may well get a pat on the back from Patrick Henry, but he's sure to get a tongue lashing, and a sermon, from the Rev. Leland. ◆

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When Would Jesus Bolt?

Meet Randy Brinson, the advance guard of evangelicals leaving the GOP.

By Amy Sullivan

The Republicans were filibustering the Bible bill. On a Tuesday afternoon in early February, Republican legislators in Alabama took to the crimson-carpeted floor of the state house to oppose legislation that would authorize an elective course on the Bible in public high schools. The recommended curriculum for the course had been vouched for by Christian Right all-stars like Chuck Colson and Ted Haggard, but so far as Republicans were concerned, there was only one pertinent piece of information about the bill: It was sponsored by two Democrats. And now Republicans were prepared to do everything in their procedural power to stop it, even if that meant lining up to explain why they could not—could not!—stand for this attempt to bring a class about the Bible into public schools.

When I came to Montgomery to watch the debate over the Bible literacy bill, I had expected something pro forma, a Bible lovefest. Alabama is, after all, God's country. On the drive from Atlanta, I sampled some of the area's many Christian radio stations to catch up on the Christian rock that doesn't get played as often in Washington—some classic Amy Grant, a little Third Day, and a new group, Jonah 33 (think 3 Doors Down, but with more Jesus lyrics). Outside, it looked like the good Lord could have reached down and molded Adam out of the red clay. This is the state that produced Judge Roy Moore and the Ten Commandments statue. Martin Luther King, Jr., pastored his first church here, Dexter Avenue Baptist. In Snead, a convenience-store owner offers free coffee or soda to anyone who recites the Bible verse of the month, and people do it because it's a two-fer: Learn the Bible *and* get a free Dr. Pepper.

As far as people around here are concerned, you can always use a little more Bible. It's not taught in the schools very often, because the Supreme Court ruled in 1963 that public schools couldn't hold devotional classes, and many school boards—unsure of how else to teach about the Bible—don't want to get sued. But when some local leaders learned last summer about a curriculum package produced by the Bible Literacy Project out of Fairfax, Va., the problem seemed to be solved. The course presents the Bible in a historical and cultural context—giving students a better understanding of biblical allusions in art, literature, and music. More importantly, it has been vetted by conservative and liberal legal experts to withstand constitutional challenge.

One of the leading advocates of the Bible course, Dr. Randy Brinson, met me at entrance to the state house. Brinson, a tall sandy-haired physician from Montgomery who speaks with a twang and the earnest enthusiasm of a youth-group leader, is a lifelong Republican and founder of Redeem the Vote, a national voter registration organization that targets evangelicals. Since discovering the Bible literacy course, he has successfully lobbied politicians in Florida, Georgia, and Missouri to introduce bills that would set up similar classes. But it is here at home that he's encountered the most resistance. "You should see who's against this thing," he told me, shaking his head.

Indeed, when Brinson and the other supporters—including several Pentecostal ministers, some Methodists, and a member of the state board of education—entered the state house chamber to make their case, they faced off against representatives from the Christian Coalition, Concerned Women of America, and the Eagle Forum. These denizens of the Christian Right denounced the effort, calling it "extreme" and "frivolous" and charging that it would encourage that most dangerous of activities, "critical thinking." The real stakes of the fight, though, were made clear by Republican Rep. Scott Beason when he took his turn at the lectern. "This is more than about God," he reminded his colleagues. "This is about politics."

Actually, it's about both—a fight over which party gets to claim the religious mantle. Nationally, and in

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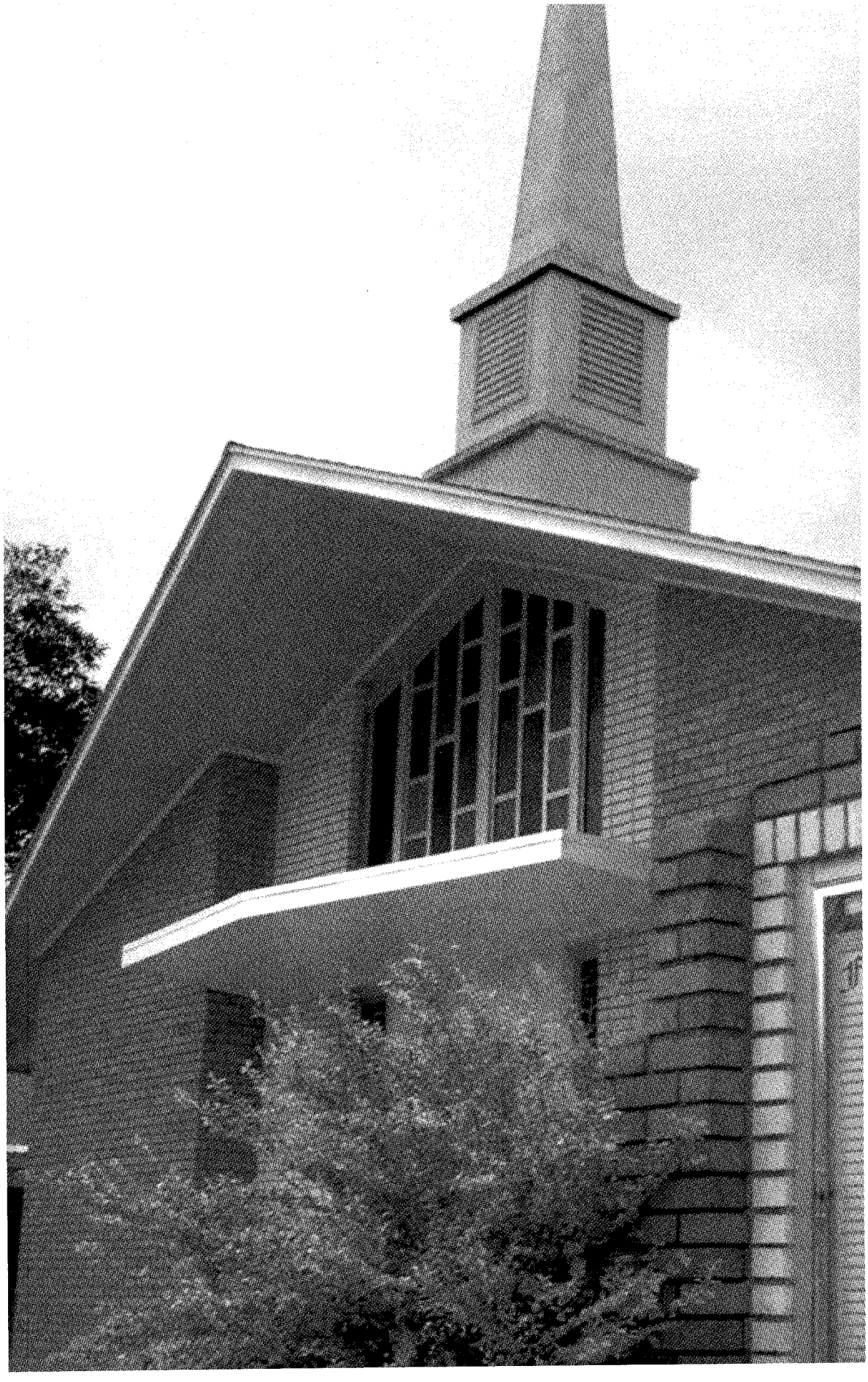

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states like Alabama, the GOP cannot afford to allow Democrats a victory on anything that might be perceived as benefiting people of faith. Republican political dominance depends on being able to manipulate religious supporters with fear, painting the Democratic party as hostile to religion and in the thrall of secular humanists. That image would take quite a blow if the party of Nancy Pelosi was responsible for bringing back Bible classes—even constitutional ones—to public schools.

The holy skirmish down in Alabama, with its "GOP blocks votes on Bible class bill" headlines, may seem like just a one-time, up-is-down, oddity.. But it's really the frontline of a larger war to keep Democrats from appealing to more moderate evangelical voters. American politics is so closely divided that if a political party peels off a few percentage points of a single big constituency, it can change the entire electoral map. To take the most recent example, African-Americans, who represent 11 percent of the electorate, cast 88 percent of their ballots for Democrats nationally. But Bush was able to get those numbers down to 84 percent in key states like Ohio and Pennsylvania in 2004—and kept the White House as a result. Republican strategists recognized that a significant number of black voters are very conservative on social issues, but have stayed with the Democratic party because of its reputation for being friendlier to racial minorities. The GOP didn't need a strategy to sway the entire black community; it just needed to pick off enough votes to put the party over the top.

Democrats could similarly poach a decisive percentage of the GOP's evangelical base. In the last election, evangelicals made up 26 percent of the electorate, and 78 percent of them voted for Bush. That sounds like a fairly inviolate bloc. And, indeed, the conservative evangelicals for whom abortion and gay marriage are the deciding issues are unlikely to ever leave the Republican party. But a substantial minority of evangelical voters—41 percent, according to a 2004 survey by political scientist John Green at the University of Akron—are more moderate on a host of issues ranging from the environment to public education to support for government spending on anti-poverty programs. Broadly speaking, these are the suburban, two-working-parents, kids-in-public-school, recycle-the-newspapers evangelicals. They may be pro-life, but it's in a Catholic, "seamless garment of life" kind of way. These moderates have largely remained in the Republican coalition because of its faith-friendly image. A targeted effort by the Democratic party to appeal to them could produce victories in the short-term: To win the 2004 presidential election, John Kerry needed just 59,300 additional votes in Ohio—that's four percent of the total evangelical vote in the state, or approximately ten percent of Ohio's moderate evangelical voters. And if the Democratic party changed its reputation on religion, the result could alter the electoral map in a more significant and permanent way.

That's why, insiders say, the word has gone forth from the Republican National Committee to defeat Democratic efforts to reclaim religion. Republicans who disregard the instructions and express support for Democratic efforts are swiftly disciplined. At the University of Alabama, the president of the College Republicans was forced to resign after she endorsed the Bible legislation. A few states away, a Missouri Republican who sponsored a Bible literacy bill came under criticism from conservatives for consulting with Brinson and subsequently denied to a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter that he had ever even heard of Brinson. But as for Brinson himself, he's already gone. "Oh, they're ticked at me," he says. "But it's because they're scared. This has the potential to break the Republican coalition."

Willing to play ball

Three years ago, Randy Brinson would have been the first to tell you that he was an unlikely political player, and an even less likely Democratic collaborator. While his father had been a classic southern Democrat who shifted with George Wallace and made the leap to the Republican party with Reagan, Brinson, who grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, had come of age in the new Republican South. He had worked on the campaign of the first Republican to be elected governor in South Carolina when he was in boarding school there and was an early Reagan supporter at college in Georgia in the mid-1970s. When Brinson moved his family to Montgomery after medical school, he naturally got involved in local politics, and in the late 1990s, he was a health-care advisor to the Republican governor Fob James.

But he was essentially an unknown figure until, in 2003, he figured out a way to combine his three passions—religion, politics, and music. He had already been part of a group that started WAY-FM (as in, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"), a Christian radio station based in Montgomery and carried in 44 markets. With an upcoming presidential election, Brinson realized that a religious version of MTV's Rock the Vote would have the best chance of reaching young evangelicals and getting them involved in politics. Using his own money at first, he created a non-profit called Redeem the Vote and hired the media firm that marketed Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, giving him instant access to their contacts throughout the evangelical world. Through partnerships with more than 30 Christian music acts and summer concerts like Creation East and Spirit Coast West (the Christian equivalents of Lilith Fair or Lollapalooza), Redeem the Vote registered more voters than all of the efforts of the Christian Right heavyweights—Focus on the Family, the Southern Baptist Convention, American Family Association, and the Family Research Council—combined.

Suddenly, Brinson was on the radar of national media

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like *The Washington Post* and "Nightline," and catching the eye of fellow conservatives. With such an impressive showing his first time out and direct access to young evangelicals, the most coveted of resources, Brinson could have been on track to become a major player in the Christian Right. The old guard—figures like James Dobson, Chuck Colson, Don Wildmon, James Kennedy, Phyllis Schlafly—are all in their seventies; the future of the movement lies with people like Brinson, who are twenty or thirty years younger and have credibility with the grassroots.

So when religious conservatives convened a meeting at the Hay-Adams Hotel in Washington a few weeks after the election, Brinson was invited. The room was full of men who had played some role in keeping the White House in Bush's hands. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention sat at Brinson's table. Rick Warren, author of the best-seller *The Purpose-Driven Life*, wasn't far away. Rep. Tom DeLay (D-Tex.) and Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) came over from the Hill to talk with the group. The mood was celebratory, but with an aggressive, hostile edge. They had won, and now they wanted to collect.

The main item of business that day was what to do with Santorum's colleague, the pesky pro-choice Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.). Specter held a crucial position as chair of the Judiciary Committee and had recently outraged this group by telling the press that he would apply "no litmus test" to judicial nominees. Now they wanted him gone, ousted, stripped of power. When, in the midst of escalating rhetoric, Brinson spoke up to suggest that perhaps punishing Specter wasn't the wisest decision, the idea wasn't well received. "That," he says, "was my first inkling that I wasn't one of them." If being a player in this world meant calling for the heads of moderate Republicans and ginning up fake controversies like a supposed "war on Christmas," Brinson wasn't terribly interested.

Not long after, while Brinson was still turning the taste of disillusionment around in his mouth, a Democrat called from Washington. The immediate post-election conventional wisdom was that Democrats lost because they couldn't appeal to so-called "moral values" voters. Democrats immediately embarked on a crash course in religious outreach and sought out people who could teach them about evangelicals. Brinson, who had caught the attention of the Democratic youth-vote industry, seemed like an obvious choice.

As for Brinson, when the Democratic chief of staff on the other end of the line asked whether the doctor would be willing to meet with some Democrats, he thought about his recent experiences with the other side and decided "maybe it wouldn't be so bad to talk to these Democratic people." In quick succession, the lifelong Republican found himself meeting with advisors to the incoming Democratic leaders—Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.)—field directors at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and aides to Howard Dean at the Democratic National Committee. What they found is that their interests overlapped: the Democrats wanted to reach out to evangelicals, and Brinson wanted to connect with politicians who could deliver on a broader array of evangelical concerns, like protecting programs to help the poor, supporting public education, and expanding health care. It had seemed natural for him to start by pressing his own party to take up those concerns, but Democrats appeared to be more willing partners. They even found common ground on abortion when Brinson, who is very pro-life, explained that he was more interested in lowering abortion rates by preventing unwanted pregnancies than in using the issue to score political points.

Those Democrats who had initially been wary about working with a conservative evangelical Republican from Alabama found Brinson convincing. They also realized that conservatives had done them an enormous favor. "Listening to him talk," one of them told me, "I thought, these guys bitch-slapped him and he's willing to play ball."

At about this time, with Bush just entering his second term, his support among evangelicals began to slip. They had turned out in record numbers to give him nearly 80 percent of their votes. And for what? Conservative evangelicals didn't like the fact that their demand to oust Specter was ultimately denied. Nor were they pleased that the Harriet Miers nomination had been bungled after it was peddled to them as a way to put one of their own on the high court. The Abramoff scandal didn't help either, with its manipulation of Christian Right leaders to support gambling interests and email messages referring to evangelicals as "wackos."

For their part, more moderate evangelicals soured on Bush for many of the reasons that lowered his approval ratings across the board: an unpopular Social Security plan, a lack of progress in Iraq, and the failed response to Hurricane Katrina. The right-of-center magazine *Christianity Today* ran an editorial declaring that "single-issue politics is neither necessary nor wise." One-third of the students and faculty at Calvin College in the heart of conservative western Michigan signed a full-page ad protesting Bush's Iraq policy when he gave a commencement address there. Many moderates were dismayed when the old guard refused to join protests against federal budget cuts that fall disproportionately on the poor in favor of what James Dobson called "pro-family tax cuts." These moderates had supported Bush despite often disagreeing with his specific positions. But in 2005, according to an Associated Press poll, the percentage of them who believed the country was headed in the right direction dropped by 30 points.

Big business vs. believers

The newly converted are the most zealous, sharing

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41 percent of evangelicals, a substantial minority, are moderate on a host of issues ranging from the environment to public education to support for government spending on anti-poverty programs.

the good news with gusto to any and all comers. Every few days, Randy Brinson calls me with another revelation. Republicans? "The power structure in the Republican party is too entrenched with big business. It's not with evangelicals—they're a means to an end." The Christian Right? "They just want to keep the culture war going because it raises a lot of money for them." Abramoff? "Evangelicals were being used as pawns to promote a big money agenda." His fellow evangelicals? "Can't they see that Republicans are just pandering to them??" He once was blind, but now he sees.

What sets Brinson apart from other disgruntled evangelicals is that he has an infrastructure at his disposal. Although Redeem the Vote is still engaged in voter registration activities, Brinson has expanded its mission, branching out into issue advocacy and using the organizational capability developed during the campaign to mobilize evangelicals at a moment's notice. Last year, when a Republican state senator led an effort to shift money from Alabama's education trust fund to more conservative causes, Brinson generated nearly 60,000 email messages—nearly half of the state senate district. It didn't take long for the legislator to cry 'uncle' and leave the funds for public education.

It's for this reason that Brinson has not been completely shut out of conversations in the Christian Right and officials at the White House continue to take his calls. He has numbers behind him, and they all know it. In an uncharacteristically boastful moment, Brinson crows that Republicans "are sweating bullets because they know what we can do."

While Brinson has been working with Democrats in Alabama on the Bible literacy bill, other evangelicals are having their own road to Damascus moments. One of them is Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs at the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and a frequent subject of profiles on "kinder, gentler" evangelicals in outlets like *Newsweek* and *USA Today*. Cizik has spent years trying to get evangelicals invested in what he calls "creation care," the idea that God gave them responsibility for tending to the earth. His hope has been that a Republican administration would be more likely to pay attention to lobbying from its own base on issues like carbon dioxide emissions than from liberal environmentalists.

In early January, I talked to Cizik about his efforts to get evangelicals to take a stand on climate change, a move that would place considerable political pressure on the administration to take the problem seriously. The NAE represents 52 denominations with 45,000 churches and 30 million members across the country—getting them all to agree on something is no easy task, but Cizik had made impressive strides and was optimistic. Convinced that his only course of action was to work with Republicans, he spent an hour patiently explaining why evangelicals were better off trying to change Republican attitudes about the environment rather than working with Democrats who already embraced his position. Not able to help myself, I argued back. *It's not as if the Bush administration doesn't support environmental policies because they hate trees. It's because they have powerful business supporters who don't like regulation.* Still, Cizik held firm, insisting that evangelicals had to change "our own party."

A month later, I ran into Cizik at the National Prayer Breakfast. That morning, he had opened up his *Washington Post* to find an article based on a letter to his boss from the old guard—Dobson, Colson, Wildmon, and the rest—suggesting, in the way that Tony Soprano makes suggestions, that the NAE back off its plan to take a public position on global warming. "Bible-believing evangelicals," the letter-writers argued, "disagree about the cause, severity and solutions to the global warming issue." The leaked letter was a blatant attempt to torpedo Cizik's efforts, and it had worked. The NAE would take no stand on climate change.

There was no doubt that the administration had prevailed on the more pliable figures of the Christian Right to whack one of their own. Cizik was beside himself. It was hard to resist the 'I told you so' moment, and I didn't. But when I suggested to him that this was an example of the way that business seemed to win out most of the time when religious and business interests came into conflict in GOP politics, he stopped me. "Not most of the time," he corrected. "Every time. Every single time." And he's no longer sure that can change. "Maybe not with this administration...We need to stop putting all of our eggs in one basket—that's just not good politics."

Cizik wasn't the only example of this shift at the Prayer Breakfast. At the main event earlier in the day, keynote speaker Bono (of U2 and antipoverty crusading fame) enjoyed a far more enthusiastic reception than President Bush, whose applause was, several conservative

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Last year, when a Republican state senator led an effort to shift money from Alabama's education trust fund to more conservative causes, Randy Brinson generated nearly 60,000 email messages opposing the shift from evangelicals.

religious leaders told me, surprisingly weak. ("He got a standing ovation when he entered, but that's because you have to stand," observed one evangelical.) It could have had something to do with the fact that Bono highlighted this tension between what's good for corporate interests and what serves the cause of justice. He went through a litany of examples—trade agreements that make it harder for third-world countries to sell their products, tax policies that shift debt to the next generation, patent laws that raise the price of life-saving drugs—and then put the challenge to his audience: "God will not accept that. Mine won't, at least. Will yours?"

Evangelicals—particularly centrists—are increasingly answering, "No!" Rick Warren has recently started a campaign to end global poverty, reminding his followers that "Life is not about having more and getting more—it's about serving God and serving others." Groups like the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) are taking up Cizik's cause; 63 percent of evangelicals in a recent survey released by EEN said that global warming was an immediate concern. Half went even further, agreeing that steps needed to be taken to reduce global warming, even if it meant a high economic cost for the United States. Former *National Review* writer Rod Dreher has a just-published book that urges religious conservatives to question negative consequences of the free market.

The list of issues these evangelicals care about extends beyond the social hot-buttons that win elections. And yet, as Cizik notes, when they try to promote concerns that threaten the interests of big business, evangelicals are stymied every time. Observers date the latest round of religious/business tensions to the mid-1990s disagreement over whether to continue China's most-favored-nation trading status. Although the issue split Democrats, the most serious dispute was within the Republican party. Religious conservatives, led by evangelicals, argued that the U.S. should not trade with a country that had serious human rights abuses, including persecution of Christians. But their concerns were overridden by corporations who lusted after China's vast, largely untapped market.

More recently, evangelicals and other religious leaders have met with officials at the Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to request government action to protect children from receiving pornography over wireless devices. This was a cause the Bush-Cheney campaigned trumpeted during 2004 as proof of its commitment to help parents protect their children from harmful cultural influences. That was before wireless companies weighed in to oppose the regulation, however. In their latest meeting with federal agencies, the religious leaders were politely but firmly rebuffed.

Even a simple measure to protect the rights of workers to wear religious garb such as the *hijab* in the workplace or to swap work schedules with a colleague on religious holidays like Good Friday hit a brick wall when business interests got involved. For ten years, Republican congressional leaders—and, since 2001, the Bush White House—have refused to support the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (cosponsored by John Kerry and Rick Santorum) because the business lobby, led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, opposes the idea that employers should have to make accommodations for religious workers. In a November 2005 hearing on the legislation, Rep. Mark Souder (R-Ind.), angrily dressed down the Chamber's witness, declaring himself "incredibly disgusted, as well as disappointed" by her testimony. This earned him a rebuke from the committee chair, who reminded Souder that "private business...has the right to set the rules."

This is hardly a new tension in the Republican coalition. In 1984, Sidney Blumenthal wrote a fascinating article in *The New Republic*, detailing how Reagan's political advisors struggled to sideline the religious conservatives who had put them into power. A "strategy of repressive tolerance," he wrote, was the work of economic conservatives who found the agenda of the Christian Right inconvenient and often embarrassing. The battle plan sounds very familiar today: The Christian Right rallied its followers around issues like abortion and school prayer; the White House offered "insincere gestures of support" while instructing congressional leaders to place relevant legislation in permanent limbo; and White House aides made sure the Christian Right constituency was "maintained in a state of perpetual mobilization."

The flaw in this strategy, Blumenthal noted, was that "The White House served as an incubator for the movement it was trying to contain." After eight years of

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this, religious conservatives wised up. And when televangelist Pat Robertson entered the 1988 presidential primaries, his strong early showing stemmed in large part from the support of frustrated evangelicals. Back then, of course, the issues that the White House was working to avoid were conservative favorites like abortion and school prayer. That's still a problem for the Bush administration, but now they face dissent from the other side, as well. The first time around, of course, Robertson failed to get the nomination, and most evangelicals--faced with the choice between the Episcopalian George H.W. Bush or the avowedly secular Michael Dukakis--drifted back to the GOP. What will happen in 2008 is now an open question.

Giving Karl Rove heartburn

Like an abusive boyfriend, Republicans keep moderate evangelicals in the coalition by alternating between painting their options as bleak and wooing them with sweet talk. *You can't leave me—where are you going to go? To them? They think you're stupid, they hate religion. Besides, you know I love you—I'm a compassionate conservative.* The tactic works as long as evangelicals don't call the GOP's bluff and as long as Democrats are viewed as hostile to religion.

Randy Brinson is proof that some evangelicals are willing to take their chances and cross over to see what Democrats have to offer. There is a growing recognition among mainstream Democrats and the once-quiescent Religious Left that they can reframe issues they care about in terms that appeal to religious voters. But winning over moderate evangelicals—or moderate religious voters generally—will take more than just repackaging old positions. It will require aggressively staking out new positions that can be used to demonstrate the tension within the GOP's religious/business coalition—embracing, for instance, the Workplace Religious Freedom Act. And it means forwarding new ideas that can counter the conservative-promoted image of progressives as anti-religious—ideas like Bible-as-literature courses in public high schools, which might anger some secularists on the left but are perfectly consonant with liberal values.

A sign that Democratic leaders are beginning to get it is the plan—promoted by leaders such as Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton—to lower abortion rates by preventing unwanted pregnancies. Full-throated support of this effort, and a recognition that abstinence education plays a role in lowering teen pregnancy rates (along with birth control), puts Democrats alongside the majority of voters on this difficult issue, and it is especially appealing to moderate evangelicals. They're not looking to punish everything outside of procreative marital sex; they just want to see fewer abortions take place. And because evangelicals generally don't have the same opposition to contraception that Catholics do, Democrats can promote the kind of plan that would truly reduce abortions—something Republicans, with their reliance on right-wing Catholics—can't afford to do.

Despite all of the punditry about a "God gap" at the voting booth, this is a better moment for Democrats to pick up support from religious moderates than any other time in the past few decades. That's because evangelicals themselves are the ones who are broadening the faith agenda, insisting that there are issues they care about beyond abortion and gay marriage, connecting Gospel messages about the golden rule and the Good Samaritan to the policies they want their government to support.

For thirty years, the Republican advantage among religious voters has come from being able to successfully control the definition of "religious," conflating it with "conservative" and encouraging the media to do the same. Measured against that yardstick, most Democrats come up short. But when the standard is more complex, when being religious also means caring about the environment and poverty and human rights and education , the plane levels. Soon enough, Republicans start to miss the mark, and Democrats get a little closer.

This is what gives Karl Rove and the other GOP headcounters heartburn. A third-party candidacy by Roy Moore would be troublesome, but conservative evangelicals are ultimately loyal to the Republican party. And while it might irritate business supporters, the administration could probably toss moderate evangelicals a few crumbs on the environment or global poverty. But once that door is opened, it can't be shut again. Whether or not large numbers of moderates migrate to the Democratic party, if they succeed in expanding the scope of "religious issues," the GOP will lose its lock on faith.

And so Republicans revert to the only tactic they have left: fear. The fight down in Alabama has shown that they will do whatever they have to in order to prevent Democrats from claiming a piece of the religious mantle, even if it means taking what could be portrayed as the "anti-religion" stance themselves. On the same day that Alabama Republicans launched their filibuster of the Bible literacy bill, state GOP chairwoman Twinkle Cavanaugh published an op-ed that charged the Bible curriculum was written by "ultra-liberal groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, the Council for Islamic Education, and the People for the American Way." (It was not.) Randy Brinson chuckled as he reported this to me, saying, "This is smokin' them out. Now we see what they really care about. It's not religion; they care about power." He may have the last laugh. According to convoluted state law, Democrats can revive the Bible literacy bill after the Alabama legislature approves all of its budget bills this spring—and they have the votes to pass it. ◆

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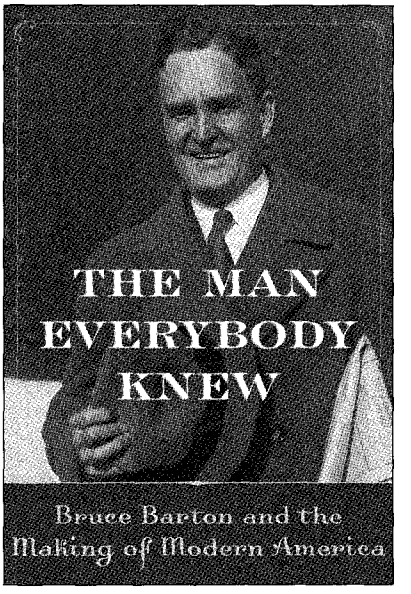
The Forgotten Imagemeister

Ad-man Bruce Barton was the most formidable operative in American politics—until he took on FDR.

By David Greenberg

When Bruce Barton died in 1967 at the age of 80, a colleague from his advertising firm BBDO proudly described him as "the man everybody knew"—a play on the title of Barton's best-selling 1925 life of Jesus, *The Man Nobody Knows*. The judgment was apt: Barton had been a giant of his age. *The New York Times* featured his obituary on page one, summing up an extraordinarily dazzling and diverse career: successful magazine writer and editor; celebrated popularizer of Christian ideas; advertising trailblazer; public relations guru to presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover; Republican congressman from Manhattan's "silk-stocking" district; and, not least, rhetorical whipping boy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose jibes at the obstructionist lawmakers "Martin, Barton, and Fish" felicitously tripped off of the tongues of Democrats in the homestretch of the 1940 presidential campaign.

For a man so influential in so many realms of society—politics and religion, journalism and business—Barton slid into obscurity after his death with surprising speed. To be sure, scholars have flocked to him as a subject. Essays about Barton by Leo Ribuffo, Jackson Lears, and the late Warren Sussman have become staples of graduate-school reading lists. Focusing on Barton's rendering of Jesus as a figure out of Dale Carnegie—indeed, as a veritable adman *avant la lettre*, hawking his teachings around the Holy Land—historians have typically interpreted Barton as epitomizing the nation's entrée in the 1920s into modernity. Barton's ideas, Sussman wrote, "found a way of bridging the gap between the demands of a Calvinistic producer ethic with its emphasis on hard work, self-denial, savings, and the new increasing demands of a hedonistic consumer culture: spend, enjoy, use up." For Lears, Barton likewise personified the shift "from salvation to self-realization." Certainly, *The Man Nobody Knows*, the bestselling book in the country for two years straight, caught the zeitgeist, allowing Americans anxious about social upheaval to retain their belief in a (watered-down) form of Christianity while blessing their embrace of the new creed of self-fulfillment.



The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America
By Richard M. Fried
Ivan R. Dee, $27.50

But despite this academic attention, Barton has until now lacked a book-length biography. Indeed, claims Richard Fried, a leading historian of the Cold War and McCarthyism, "Bruce Barton is surely the most prominent American of the 20th Century without a biography." To rectify this omission, Fried has written *The Man Everybody Knew*—picking up the punning phrase to underscore Barton's once-sweeping fame, while also acknowledging the relative obscurity into which his subject has fallen. Despite a few unfortunate efforts to sound literary ("Clever and voluble, Barton was an agile picador working against a distracted New Deal bull"), this admirable, readable

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volume enriches our knowledge of Barton's career and his political involvements in particular. Interpretively, it may not break much new ground, but—rather like Larry Tye's 1998 biography of Edward Bernays, *The Father of Spin*—it offers a well-researched and detailed, if relatively brief, account of a neglected pioneer of contemporary image-making.

The Man Everybody Knew also resembles another recent biography, Steven Watts's *People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, which interpreted the celebrity carmaker as similarly straddling the 19th-century America of thrift and moralism and the 20th-century world of spending and enjoyment. Indeed, Sussman, in his canonical essay, grouped Barton and Ford with Babe Ruth as cultural heroes of the 1920s. What Ford and Barton shared—Ruth perhaps less so—was a worldview that fused an enthusiasm for capitalism's ability to deliver unprecedented comforts to millions with an abiding attachment to the fading ideals of small-town life.

Barton was born in 1886, the son of a Congregationalist minister who espoused the liberal Protestantism then beginning to challenge the more traditional Christian doctrines. The senior Barton's calling clearly made an impact on his son. Bruce, embarking on a journalism career, often took up religious subjects: pieces about missionary projects for a Presbyterian journal, profiles of evangelists such as the preacher Billy Sunday, even a biography of Christ called *A Young Man's Jesus* that preceded Barton's more famous book by 11 years. In this first of his many careers, Barton often found himself toiling at understaffed magazines where he would take a hand in running the business side. The experience—along with his stints during World War I doing promotional work for the Salvation Army and the YMCA—left him primed after the armistice to make advertising his main calling. With Alex Osborn and Roy Durstine, he founded BDO in 1919. Nine years later, they merged with George Batten's firm to become the legendary BBDO.

If cultural historians have amply dissected *The Man Nobody Knows*, annalists of advertising have mined BBDO's ground-breaking campaigns for some of the era's biggest companies, including General Electric and General Motors. Fried, primarily a political historian, covers this ground dutifully, but his narrative comes alive when he fleshes out Barton's equally seminal part in public affairs, beginning during the 1920s. Few other historians have fully credited Barton's importance to Calvin Coolidge, a fellow Amherst graduate, celebrant of capitalism, and dispenser of bromides. Recognizing Coolidge's potential early on, Barton wrote puff pieces of the dour New Englander when he was still governor of Massachusetts. When Coolidge became president, Barton played a dual role, helping his client write speeches and stage photo ops as adman, then donning his journalist's hat to exalt the president in glossy magazines.

Barton's salesmanship, along with Coolidge's underappreciated talents, succeeded. The public image that Barton and Coolidge crafted togeth-

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er— Silent Cal, the unpretentious, upright steward of prosperity and guardian of old-fashioned values—played well across America, except among those acerbic intellectual critics of 1920s normality like H.L. Mencken and Walter Lippmann. Alas, Barton's next political client, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover, proved less amenable to P.R. Although Hoover cruised into office in 1928 partly on the strength of his "Wonder Boy" reputation as the man who had fed a ravaged postwar Europe, not even the ablest Madison Avenue image-smith could salvage his presidency from the wreckage of the Great Depression. Indeed, the 1932 election was the rare occasion in which the Democrats' publicity efforts worked better than the Republicans'; they branded the makeshift camps that homeless and jobless Americans erected "Hoovervilles," to the incumbent's lasting frustration.

As he oversaw BBDO in the 1930s, Barton remained a loyal Republican. But he also seemed to reconcile himself to the New Deal. Fried argues persuasively that despite the textbook caricature of Barton as a mindless booster for business, he accepted the need for an affirmative, if limited, government. Historians, Fried suggests, have too often overemphasized Barton's apologetics for corporate America and his portrait of Jesus as a salesman, forgetting that he identified with the GOP's liberal wing. "At least 70 percent to 80 percent of the institutions and laws" of the New Deal, Barton correctly argued to party-mates, "will have to be continued even under a Republican administration." When GOP leaders recruited him to fill a vacancy in the House in 1937, Barton agreed, regaining for his party the traditionally Republican seat that represented New York's East Side. "We in the advertising business know more about people than politicians do," Barton crowed, in a candid summation of his worldview.

In Congress, Barton made a name for himself, even as he continued, as was not uncommon then, to work for BBDO. Soon, pundits mentioned him as a possible presidential candidate, and in 1940, GOP leaders tapped him to run for the Senate. Although he had been an isolationist in the 1930s and even made some sympathetic remarks about Mussolini, his anti-war stance more closely resembled the liberal than the reactionary one; by 1940, with the Nazis in Paris, he muted his anti-war views substantially. Like many Republicans, he ran instead on the argument that rewarding FDR's pursuit of a third term by violating the taboo against three-term presidencies would mark a dangerous step toward unchecked executive power. It would amount, he said, to nothing less than "the end of freedom."

FDR fought back by depicting the Republicans as dangerously naïve about Hitler's designs. In a speech in Madison Square Garden in October 1940, the president assailed three Republicans who the year before had opposed his request to lift the arms embargo on Europe: Minority Leader Joseph Martin, New York's Hamilton Fish, and Barton. Stringing them together in a sing-song phrase to the cadences of the nursery rhyme "Winken, Blinken and Nod," he mocked "Martin, Barton, and Fish." The crowd loved it and began chanting the phrase, and subsequent audiences echoed the mantra as a taunt. Though hardly the critical difference in the fall races, the focus on the GOP's isolationist tendencies helped FDR repulse Wendell Willkie's challenge. By reducing Barton's support among New York Jews and other liberals distrustful of any dissent from the president's staunch anti-Hitler line, it also may have contributed to Barton's loss to the incumbent Sen. James M. Mead. The irony was rich: Barton the master copywriter stung, if not undone, by a clever jingle. Although he would later advise Tom Dewey and Dwight Eisenhower, and BBDO remained the Republicans' favored advertising firm, Barton's political career had reached its apogee.

What, then, to make of Barton's politics? Fried laces the book with references to positions he took throughout his career and notes that they often seemed contradictory. Barton equivocated on the New Deal. Mildly anti-Semitic or pro-Hitler remarks sat uncomfortably in his record next to apparently sincere professions of religious toleration. His denunciations of America's imperial aspirations—he opposed the Marshall Plan, for example—made no mention of his own work for the United Fruit Company (BBDO came up with "The Chiquita Banana Song"). Barton supported Republicans as diverse as Eisenhower, Robert Taft, Nelson Rockefeller, Barry Goldwater, and Richard Nixon. Although Fried fairly pegs Barton as a liberal Republican, he never plumbs the substance of Barton's politics in enough depth to reconcile these disparate opinions. The closest he comes is to call Barton "eclectic," or to emphasize "the priority he cherished for the individual"—too weak a thread to unify these sundry views.

At bottom, the thinness of Barton's political beliefs, as seen in this fine book, may reveal that he was simply not a serious political thinker. Though he spent much of his career serving presidents and the Republican Party, ultimately, politics were secondary for him. Like automobiles and cigarettes and even Christianity, political leaders and views were interesting to him as commodities to peddle in pursuit of a bland vision of the good life—not as causes in which to fervently believe. It's surely the case that today's sneering critics of Washington overestimate the fickleness of our leaders and underestimate the depth of their convictions. But to the extent that there exists some merit in viewing politics as a superficial contest of photo opportunities, sound bites, slogans, and images, hatched by Madison Avenue's savviest cynics, it is a development for which Bruce Barton deserves no small share of responsibility.

David Greenberg is a professor of history, journalism, and media studies at Rutgers University and the author of *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*. He is writing a biography of Calvin Coolidge for Henry Holt's American Presidents series.

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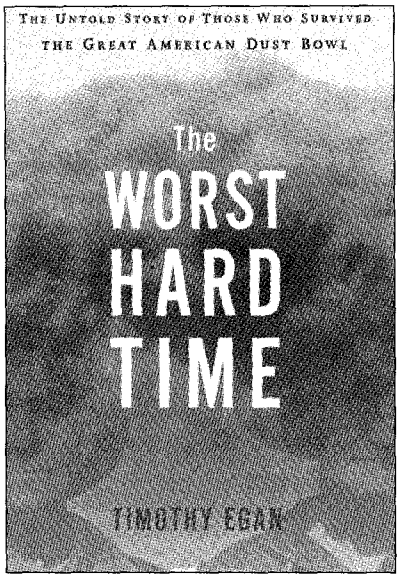
The Stubbornest Americans

A tale of the farmers who refused to flee the Dust Bowl.

By Andrew R. Graybill

For several days just after Christmas 2005, a series of wildfires raged in Oklahoma and northern Texas. Caused by a devastating combination of strong, dry winds and the worst drought to hit the region in half a century, the fires claimed five lives, consumed dozens of homes, and literally wiped several communities off the map before being brought under control early in the new year. Though area residents are no strangers to hardship—they've been hit by devastating tornadoes and price fluctuations on the oil market—the holiday timing of the blazes must have seemed especially cruel.

The Worst Hard Time, journalist Timothy Egan's new book, recalls another period of adversity on the southern Plains: the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. In contrast to the recent wildfires, however, the difficulties of that earlier event spanned an entire decade and killed off not merely small towns, but also entire counties in parts of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. More than a quarter of a million people eventually deserted the region, some moving merely to less hard-hit areas within the affected states, while others trudged westward to the supposed promised land of California, where they hoped to find work in fields and orchards. Their migrations, of course, survive in the writings of novelist John Steinbeck and the iconic images taken by photographer Dorothea Lange.



The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl
By Timothy Egan
Houghton Mifflin, $28.00

Unlike Lange and Steinbeck, however, Egan focuses on those who stayed behind, either because of their determination to endure or their utter lack of opportunities elsewhere. Many of them took great pride in their decisions to remain in the Dust Bowl, such as the editor of the local newspaper in Dalhart, Texas, who founded the Last Man Club during the direst years of catastrophe. The organization distributed membership cards that began, "Barring Acts of God or unforeseen personal tragedy or family illness, I pledge myself to be the Last Man to leave this country…." (As it happened, the editor himself wound up abandoning Dalhart in the late 1930s, although he decamped only to Amarillo—some 80 miles to the south—and not, say, to the West Coast). It is precisely Egan's attention to those who remained when others fled that makes *The Worst Hard Time* such a welcome addition to the extensive literature about the Dust Bowl.

Although Egan supplies the book with essential context, he builds his story around a handful of central characters, some of whom (or their descendants) he managed to interview. Their narratives bring the disaster vividly to life. There is George Ehrlich, a German from Russia who escaped the tyranny of the czars and suffered through the American anti-German prejudice of World War I only to see his Oklahoma homestead devoured by drought, heat, and blowing dirt. There is Hazel Lucas Shaw, a farmer's wife living in the no man's land of the Oklahoma Panhandle, whose burial of her grandmother and infant daughter—both dead from dust pneumonia—coincided with Black Sunday (April 14, 1935), quite literally the darkest day of the Dust Bowl. And there is Bam White, a beleaguered farmer who became the face of the tragedy when he accepted $25 (as much as he could make in two months) from filmmaker Pare Lorentz to drag a horse-drawn plow across his devastated fields. That featured sequence from "The Plow That Broke the Plains," a government-sponsored documentary, served notice of the heartland's desperation, though White's neighbors later ostracized him for publicizing their misery.

Considering Egan's expertise as an environmental writer, it comes as no surprise that—in addition to his

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Getty Images

human cast—he highlights the natural world as a critical actor in the story. Describing the Plains on the eve of their ruin, he writes: "The land would not die an easy death. Fields were bare, scraped to hardpan in some places, heaving in others." Such attentiveness is essential, for the Dust Bowl's key lesson taught that the earth does indeed have its limits, and those who push beyond them do so at their peril. In Egan's capable hands, swirling storms of topsoil become memorable characters— menacing, unpredictable, and relentless. Likewise, swarms of grasshoppers descending upon a rare patch of carefully-cultivated vegetation conjure nightmarish images of an advancing army. Even his descriptions of less dramatic features of the Great Plains environment—such as shelterbelts (rows of trees meant to shield crops from the wind) or underground aquifers—create vibrant images for the reader.

For all its merits, *The Worst Hard Time* has its shortcomings, some of them substantial. First, Egan's attempts to capture the local idiom in his own narrative voice are distracting in the extreme. Instead of explaining that Plains farmers came to recognize the problems with their methods of cultivation, Egan writes they "got religion" Similarly, wealthy ranchers are not cattlemen, but rather "fancy-pantsers." And as for the growing rural-urban divide of the Jazz Age, Egan notes that "[t]he country had one foot in the fields, one foot in a bathtub of gin in the city." For those who live in the heartland (and probably even for those who do not), such affectations seem awkward and condescending, however well-intentioned the author might be (and from reading his acknowledgements, there is no doubting Egan's warmth and sincerity). Mercifully, Egan abandons this tic about a third of the way into the book.

Furthermore, it is a losing proposition to describe the region in hyperbole, as Egan is inclined to do, starting with the title itself. There is no doubting the horrors of the Dust Bowl—Egan and others have made that abundantly clear—but catastrophes have served as a defining aspect of life on the Plains since the era of white settlement began in earnest after 1862. For instance, the clouds of Rocky Mountain locusts that swept the continent's midsection annually from 1873-1877 reduced thousands of residents of Nebraska, among other states, to the brink of starvation. In more recent times, the ascendancy of

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industrial agriculture has driven people off the land in ever-growing numbers, forcing schools to close and residents to migrate to the cities, so some counties now have fewer residents than at any point in the last 100 years. Put simply, life has never been easy here, so to set one era above the others as "the worst hard time" is as troublesome as elevating the soldiers of one particular war to the status of "the greatest generation."

Most significantly, Egan's reluctance to extend at least some of the blame for the disaster to the small farmers themselves is problematic. To be sure, it is proper to excoriate (as Egan does) the government boosters who lured homesteaders to the southern Plains on false premises, and the federal officials who responded with aching slowness to the unfolding catastrophe. However, we know from other writers—chief among them the historian Donald Worster—that a key factor in the creation of the Dust Bowl was the attitude of the cultivators, who treated the land with an unmistakable aggression (see: "sodbusting") in their quest to wring profit from the soil. While farmers may have seen few economic alternatives, they could not plead ignorance: As Egan himself notes, area cowboys and native peoples had insisted for decades that the land was fit for grazing, not farming.

Notwithstanding these misgivings, *The Worst Hard Time* is highly worthwhile. Egan helps correct the notion that most residents fled the Dust Bowl —in fact, the overwhelming majority stayed put—and in the process he crafts a moving, eloquent testimony to human suffering and perseverance. With the debate about the future of post-Katrina New Orleans now beginning, we would do well to keep in mind that we can manipulate the natural world for only so long before it rises in revolt.

Andrew R. Graybill teaches history at the University of Nebraska. His book comparing the Texas Rangers and Canada's North-West Mounted Police is forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press.

How We Won

John Lewis Gaddis's new history of the Cold War should be next on the president's reading list.

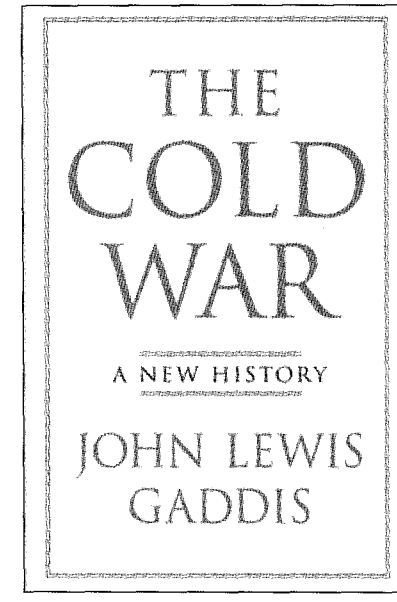
By Nicholas Thompson

I was terrified when the mailman showed up, straining under the weight of Yale professor John Lewis Gaddis's new book. The paper galleys clock in at four pounds and the title is imposingly simple: *The Cold War*. Likely the country's most esteemed historian of this particular topic, Gaddis has already churned out the following works: *Origins of the Cold War*, *Rethinking Cold War History*, and *Inquiries into the History of the Cold War*. What could be new and fresh in this volume? I expected a long, dry exegesis of how recently opened Soviet archives reveal the unappreciated influence of Anatol Gribkov.

But the enormous galleys contained a real surprise. Gaddis hasn't produced something new. Instead, he's mercilessly cribbed from his previous books, compressed key episodes, macerated major themes—and produced something terrific. The big, thick cover hides wide printing on every other page, and, inside, a short first-rate description of an era that Gaddis lived through and now has the luxury of treating as history. Eschewing the micro debates he's had with his colleagues, this new volume is about providing a readable summary of the world's most dangerous era. While doing so, he also provides useful lessons for Washington today.

The Cold War begins with the American and Russian armies converging on the Elbe River in Germany on April 25, 1945, five days before Adolf Hitler bit into a glass vial of cyanide and took a pistol to his own head. This should have been a moment to celebrate. But as Gaddis explains, the Russians and the Americans, with their incompatible ideologies, were doomed from the beginning. As his soldiers were approaching the Elbe, Joseph Stalin was avidly reading reports from his spies in America (he knew about the atomic bomb well before Harry Truman) and mulling how far he could expand his borders without earning America's ire.

Soon, the game began—coup in



The Cold War: A New History
By John Lewis Gaddis
Penguin Press, $27.95

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Czechoslovakia, Marshall Plan, Russia's atomic bomb, America's hydrogen bomb, Soviet missiles in Cuba, American soldiers in Vietnam, arms control, and the Berlin wall falling—and Gaddis smoothly describes each exchange. Throughout, he also keeps the reader aware of the conflict's most amazing fact: that the superpowers killed almost none of each other's citizens. In his one rhetorical flight of fancy, Gaddis writes a spoof section that begins by declaring, deadpan, that Douglas MacArthur ordered atomic bombs dropped on the Chinese army as it began to rout the general's soldiers during the Korean War. The Russians respond with a strike of their own, and, within a page, there's full-blown nuclear war. The ease with which the section flows may indicate the ease with which that tragedy could have happened.

Gaddis naturally focuses on the two big players and frequently reminds readers that the United States won in large part because it was just a vastly better place to live. But he also takes delight in the power of nonaligned nations. The Soviet Union and the United States knew they couldn't fight each other directly, so their battles—both for popularity and for territory—took place elsewhere. Smart leaders of small countries quickly figured out how to milk this situation. Yugoslavia's Josef Tito, for example, inveigled America into giving him aid money, and then pointed to the American fleet just off his coast if the Soviets thought about invading. He then made sure that Khrushchev sent him weapons and treated him as an equal, too. Not every small player dominated the big guys. Just ask Nicaragua. But it is interesting to see just how many tails could wag the two big dogs.

Gaddis's prime narrative focus is on the grand personalities who dominated the conflict. At rare moments, he pulls out sociological arguments—for example, suggesting that the demographics of the baby boom led to the student protests of the 1960s—but he firmly believes that it is men who make history, not the other way around. The Cold War might not have started were it not for Stalin's paranoia, and a lot more people would have survived it were it not for the callousness of Mao, the diminutive Chinese tyrant who liked greeting visitors in his swimming pool. Gaddis is particularly good on Khrushchev, countering the many historians who argue that the Soviet leader put missiles in Cuba because he feared America's vast nuclear superiority. Instead, Gaddis argues, Khrushchev was thrilled that Cuba had actually gone Communist without Soviet assistance. Indeed, the Soviet premier had vague romantic notions that a few Soviet warheads could help spread revolution around Latin America.

The two heroes of the story though are the two men who have long starred in the Yale professor's scripts: George Kennan and Ronald Reagan. At first blush, they're a rather odd couple. A frail hypochondriac with little self-confidence, Kennan was a pointy-headed intellectual and an icon to the left. A virile cowboy from California, Reagan was incurious and an icon to the right. But the two men did have something in common at core. They both were visionaries who saw new ways out of old problems and understood how to fight a war without actually ever drawing swords.

Kennan recognized before anyone else that the two superpowers could find a way of coexisting that lay between war and peace. His theory of containment—America's original, and long-defining Cold War strategy—was based on the notion that we shouldn't want to fight the Soviet Union. We should aim to keep it in check and then watch as the system rots from the inside out. The decay took longer than Kennan initially predicted. But his theory turned out to be exactly right.

Reagan was the first person to really see the folly of the arms race and to realize that the president of the United States could talk it out of existence. He knew the Soviet Union was weak, that its satellites could be persuaded to resist it, and that a few monkey wrenches could bring the whole system to its end. His wild pursuit of missile defense frazzled Gorbachev, opened the door for massive arms reductions, and helped spread the chaos that was beginning to engulf the powerful nation. Reagan's speeches helped spur the resistance in Poland, Romania, and East Germany that finally ended the conflict.

Gaddis doesn't say much about contemporary American foreign policy, but there are points our current president might take to heart. From Kennan, there's the obvious lesson that the world doesn't need to be divided into friends (whom we praise) and enemies (whom we kill). A policy of neo-containment—limit the terrorists as much as possible, co-opt their allies, and then wait for their hateful ideology to implode—could save us many of the headaches that our current, much more aggressive, policy seems to be creating.

Bush could learn a similar lesson about containment from Reagan. Our 40th president called the Soviet Union an evil empire and wrote fat checks to the Defense Department. But Reagan never threatened the U.S.S.R. directly, and after the Able Archer episode in early 1983—when Soviet spies became convinced that an American nuclear launch exercise was the real thing—he became obsessed with preventing confrontation.

Containing a state is easier than containing a terrorist band. But the essential principles to follow are the same: be tough but restrained, win allies, stay strong at home, and try to seduce your enemies instead of killing them. Let's hope this book gets passed around the White House. It's brisk enough for those busy people to read, and there are important lessons that should be heeded if we want the current war to turn out as well as the last one.

Nicholas Thompson is a contributing editor at *The Washington Monthly,* an editor at *Wired Magazine,* and a fellow at the New America Foundation.

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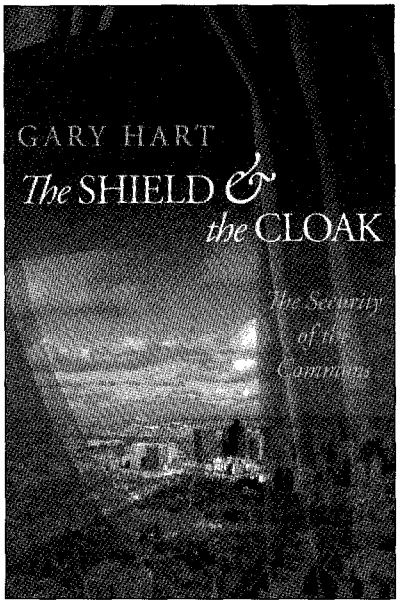
On Message

For 25 years, Gary Hart has delivered the same national security lecture. And he's still right.

By Derek Chollet

It's springtime in a crucial midterm election year. The second-term Republican president is a plain-spoken idealist (considered a visionary by his admirers, and dangerously ignorant by his opponents); he is being whipsawed by global challenges and insider ethics scandals and would prefer to spend more time on his ranch. Yet he cannot disengage. After six years out of power—including a bitter loss in the last presidential campaign—a belligerent Democratic Party is searching for a way forward. This is especially true when it comes to foreign affairs and national security—areas where the Democrats' bitter internal divisions and perceived weaknesses have proved crippling. Frustrated Democrats seek a standard-bearer who can project wisdom about the world and unblinking strength to grapple with its difficult realities; someone with creative ideas and a willingness to take on bold reforms; and politically, a leader who can appeal to voters in the South and the West. Sound familiar? This was the spring of 1986, and many Democrats knew the answer: Their man was Gary Hart.

Twenty years ago, Hart was more than just the presumed Democratic nominee. Some thought that he was the second coming of Bobby Kennedy. With deep experience in national politics, including a strong profile on foreign policy and military affairs, many believed that the Colorado senator would be the next president. But his quick ascent was matched only by his dramatic and depressing fall. Rather than entering the Oval Office, Hart retreated in disgrace to the comfortable wilderness sinecure of many former officials— making good money, dabbling in politics, and writing books.



The Shield and the Cloak: The Security of the Commons
By Gary Hart
Oxford University Press, $22.00

So, as the Democrats face a reality in 2006 very similar to the one Hart tried to lead them through two decades ago, it is entirely appropriate that he offer ideas again, this time through his pen. In *The Shield and the Cloak*, Hart returns to a subject that he knows well: America's national security policy. In the 20 years since leaving government, he has continued to play an active role in this debate, whether through his prolific writings (including for this magazine), his co-chairmanship with former Republican senator Warren Rudman of a bipartisan commission that famously warned of the dangers of terrorism before the September 11 attacks, or even as an active member of Sen. John Kerry's national security kitchen cabinet during the 2004 presidential campaign. His credibility on this subject is well-deserved—which makes this slim volume must-reading not just for Democrats, but for any American who is struggling to make sense of today's global challenges, and what policies we need in order to meet them.

Part history lesson, part chin-stroking policy paper, part partisan manifesto, Hart's book is based on a few basic ideas: That in the 21st century, security is about more than military muscle, and that since security must be understood more expansively—including the usual list of transnational threats like weapons proliferation, environmental degradation, global poverty, diseases like HIV/AIDS, and economic power—America must work with partners around the world. What Hart describes as a "security of the commons" can be neatly summarized: We are all in this together. While far less original and controversial than Hart claims, these ideas are worth repeating—especially as a critique of the Manichean "with us or against us" political climate created by George W. Bush and Karl Rove.

Hart's doubts about the security provided by America's military "shield" are hardly dovish—his point is simply that, as any general will tell you, a strong military alone

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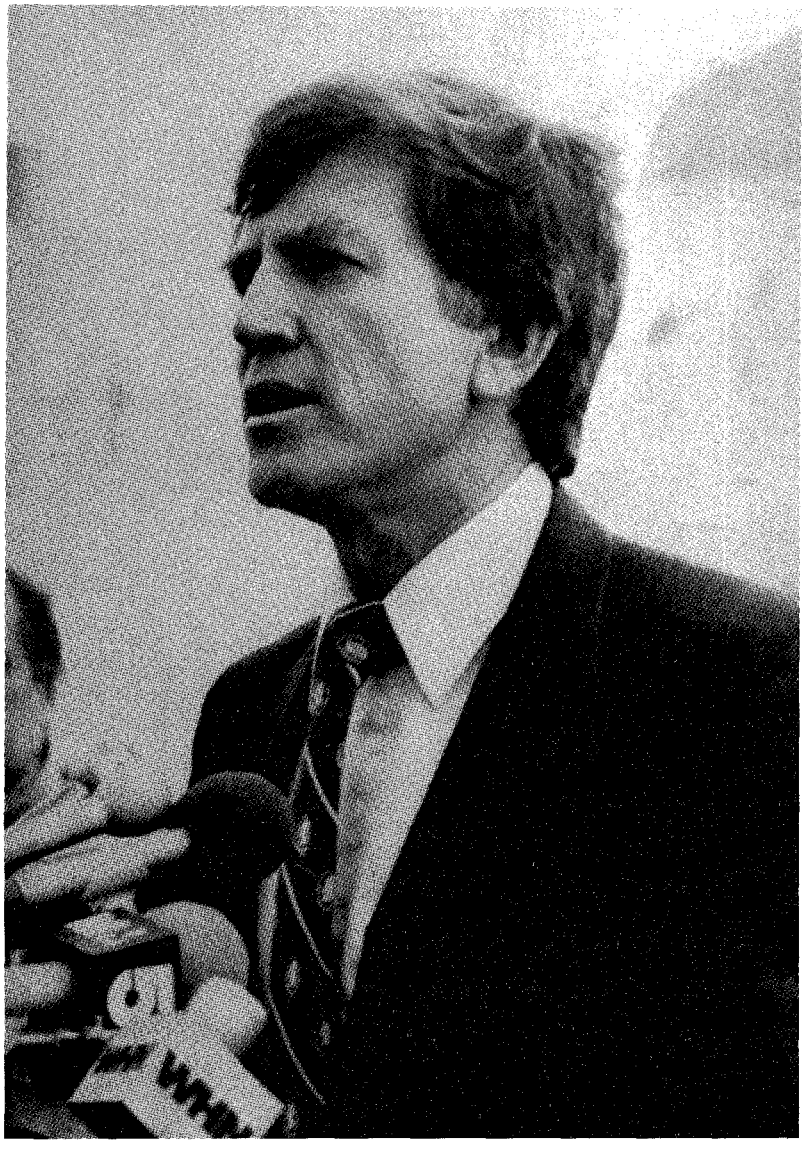

Getty Images

can't solve all of our security needs. His critique of the Bush administration's preemption doctrine is stinging. But he also calls for new policies to strengthen the shield itself to make it more capable of handling current threats—such as creating more agile, flexible, rapidly-deployable units, beefing up special forces, and giving the National Guard a greater role in homeland security. Hart has been talking about many of these ideas for more than a quarter-century when he created the congressional military reform caucus, and some he wrote about in his 1986 book on defense policy, *America Can Win*. As evidence that this kind of thinking seems to be catching on, many similar proposals (such as the emphasis on special forces and developing better capabilities for irregular warfare and peacekeeping) have been embraced by Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon in its recent "Quadrennial Defense Review."

But most of Hart's book concerns those issues that fall outside the narrow perspective of military affairs, in what he calls the "cloak" of security—things like deft multilateral diplomacy, new and improved international institutions, and reformed intelligence. Arguing that all of these have been undermined by the policies of the Bush administration, Hart offers several proposals to strengthen them. Some of these ideas are worth considering: Creating a standing international organization to protect vulnerable critical infrastructure like bridges, tunnels, and computer networks around the world would be a good use of American diplomatic leadership. Other ideas, even he admits, need some work: for instance, a proposal to create a United Nations-run Persian Gulf security force of oil-consuming countries to guarantee the free flow of oil—perhaps worthwhile to protect from terrorist attacks on oil refineries or transit points, but hardly the solution to deal with Gulf countries' internal threats that would jeopardize supplies, such as an overthrow of the Saudi royal family by Islamic extremists.

Hart also argues that America's security cloak needs more than just better policies abroad. It requires a fundamentally different approach to challenges at home. He explains that we have to expand the very idea of security into something that encompasses nearly every aspect of American life. Personal security matters just as much as national security. Hart's stress on the elements of U.S. competitiveness—a strong domestic economy focused on savings, better education emphasizing science and math, and more opportunities for civic engagement—will appeal to many progressives. So will his argument that President Bush's focus on political freedom alone is not enough to make us secure because freedom means little if one cannot provide for their family, educate their children, or have access to clean water or health care. By emphasizing issues like poverty and the threat from global warming, Hart places himself squarely in the progressive mainstream, echoing the warnings of those like former President Bill Clinton and British leaders like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

This is where Hart's book is less fulfilling than hoped. As important and convincing as many of his arguments are, they are less innovative than he makes them out to be. He

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certainly overstates the originality of both his description of the new world defined by globalization and the policy proposals that flow from it. Hart cogently summarizes much of what is already accepted as the conventional wisdom in foreign policy and progressive political circles and widely understood among the general public. He could have written much of this book years ago—and in many ways, such writers as Thomas Friedman, Joseph Nye, and Clyde Prestowitz already have.

In a 1993 interview with the writer David Remnick, Hart joked about his own "death struggle with ego," an acknowledgement of the knock many had against him years ago when he was a rising and brash presidential aspirant. One of the unappealing qualities of this book is that, in some places, ego tends to win. Too often, the subtext theme seems to be "I was right," as Hart goes out of his way to show that he has been ahead of the curve, from predicting the end of the Cold War, warning of the 9/11 attacks to arguing for much greater efforts in homeland security before it was fashionable. To be sure, Hart the elder statesman has a fair claim to hand-waving attention—in these ways and others, he was right. But these diversions give the book an element of apologia that is distracting.

That said, *The Sword and the Shield* is about big ideas—and a reminder that they matter. Gary Hart was one of those rare politicians who believed deeply in ideas and ran for office on them. Looking ahead to this November and beyond to 2008, as both Democrats and Republicans try to articulate their policies for the post-Bush world, experts and common citizens alike would be well served to read this book closely and heed Hart's core message and his example.

Derek Chollet is a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the author of *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft.*

The Coffee House Candidate

The engrossing tale of a Seattle cab driver's ill-fated run for local office.

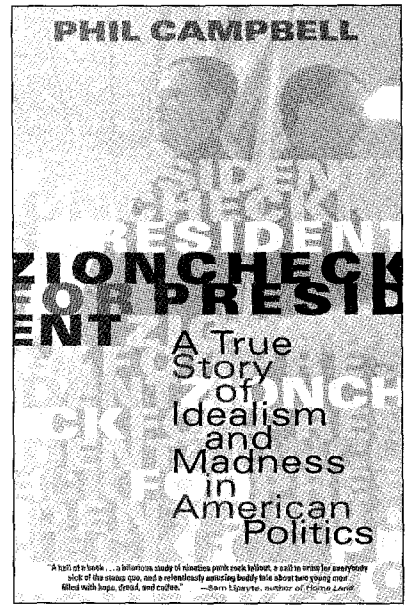
By Jonathan Rowe

Grant Cogswell was a cab driver and sometime poet who had led, with another cabbie, a quixotic ballot campaign to expand Seattle's downtown monorail and won. Phil Campbell was a writer for a Seattle weekly who was tired of being an outrage machine in a city that provided little occasion for it.

Campbell got fired. (His boss was syndicated sex columnist Dan Savage of "Savage Love" fame.) Cogswell asked Campbell to manage his campaign for the Seattle City Council. *Zioncheck for President* is the story of that campaign.

It is not a campaign memoir in the usual sense. There is not much on strategy and issues; and still less blow-by-blow. The candidate himself is somewhat blurry, beyond his crabbing about printing errors and distaste for fundraising calls. Basically, he comes across as impassioned in a good way—the kind of fellow who sits in coffee houses during the long grey Seattle winters and broods on the absurdity of "freeways" jammed with cars that burn gas as they go nowhere.

Cogswell is the believer, while Campbell is a man trying to believe, but who never truly can. He's an observer as much as a participant, the novelist as campaign manager. I suspect the thought that this could be book material occurred to him early on.



Zioncheck for President: A True Story of Idealism and Madness in American Politics
By Phil Campbell
Nation Books $15.95

I was prepared for a snarky put-down of local politics. Instead, I entered a world I became sorry to leave. The main setting is the Seattle subculture defined roughly by Kurt Cobain at one end and the WTO protests at the other. It's the sort of grunge idealism of people who might have been bike messengers one day, or maybe still are, somehow both cynical and naïve. They think that nirvana really is going to come in

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The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Thomas Hargrove

Scripps Howard News Service

"Supersized in the NFL"

January 31, 2006

During Super Bowl week, Scripps Howard published a little-noticed, but brutally clear, story. Reporter Thomas Hargrove spent months tracking down data on how long retired NFL players (most of whom spent only a year or two getting paid to play) lived after their careers had ended. The results confirmed that ex-professional football players die shockingly young, with a vast majority of the early deaths related to problems associated with obesity. It's the kind of obvious, but uncomfortable truth that the NFL has long been slow to acknowledge, and which Hargrove's diligent reporting made impossible to ignore.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. We welcome your nominations. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

the form of a rock band and are on what seems an almost nightly quest to find it.

These folks sally forth into the precincts of Seattle's mainstream Democrats, who are right-thinking in a way that perhaps helps explain why their kids might become slackers. A difficult fact of the campaign was that Cogswell was challenging the only black member of the council—a cautious and unexceptional fellow, but black; and to white Seattle-ites for whom color is a symbol more than a neighbor, this was big. "We can't vote against the colored guy," one man shouts at a meeting in a white district. "There needs to be at least one of those."

Another awkward fact was that Cogswell had vocally supported Ralph Nader in the 2000 presidential campaign, and had been as disdainful of mainstream Democrats as Nader himself was. Campbell seems mystified that Democrats would be less than enthused on that account. On this at least he was not quite distanced enough.

His focus though is on the human details—the cranky candidate, the mess-ups with volunteers, the awkward meet-and-greets, the sheer exhausting grind. He has a fine seismometer for social subtexts. At a gathering of Young Democrats at the University of Washington, he is standing around when a school board candidate pounces. Once she gets over her disappointment that he isn't a Young Dem they settle into campaign gossip, "both relieved to appear occupied."

As for the Young Dems themselves, they seemed mainly interested in riding a winner, the better for career advancement.

There are no grandiose, save-the-world thematics, and this is refreshing, especially coming from a save-the-world campaign. Neither Bob Shrum nor Grover Norquist could have written this book. I do wish Campbell had been a little less submerged in his sensibility and funk, however. There is, after all, a campaign going on here. Cogswell's appeal on the stump remains something of a mystery. After a string of defeats at Democratic district endorsement meetings, it comes as a total surprise at the end that Cogswell got 45 percent of the vote.

The author portrays the loss in his usual grey winter tones. But the vote seems extraordinary given what we've read. How did he do it?

Campbell frames the campaign with two other stories that run in tandem through the book. One is that of Marion Zioncheck, the radical and brilliant local figure who entered Congress in 1932, and flamed out four years later, finally leaping from his office window. Zioncheck is the patron saint of the Cogswell campaign; the candidate had written an epic poem to him.

He's also connected to a more immediate inspiration for the campaign, Ralph Nader; and this is something of which Campbell seems unaware. Zioncheck's House seat went to a young local prosecutor by the name of Warren Magnuson, who went on to become the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. From that perch "Maggie," as he was called, moved much of the legislation Nader set in motion in the 1960s and 1970s. How much more good Ralph would do if he seeded local campaigns such as this, rather than waged presidential non-campaigns that achieve the opposite of what he purports. (That includes, it appears, helping to defeat a Grant Cogswell.)

The other story involves Doug, the author's housemate. Doug is a lout who chugs beer, plays his stereo at wall-shaking levels, and after 9/11 buys a handgun which he fondles in his room at night. Zioncheck was the brilliant advocate of "the people." Doug is who many of those people actually are. In this, the Cogswell campaign is every venture in political idealism. Between the light and the shadow, the willing spirit and the too-weak flesh, somehow we must find our way.

Jonathan Rowe is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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Backseat Strategists

Do the Democratic Party's harshest internal critics finally have a plan for building a political majority?

By Mark Schmitt

What's most provocative in this year's crop of books about renewing the Democratic Party is what's missing. The old sectarian fights about ideology, between the Democratic Leadership Council and labor-left factions, seem to have disappeared. None of the four books reviewed here makes the argument that the Democratic Party is in a substantive way out of line ideologically. None argues that the party needs to move as a bloc to the left, right, or center. The prevailing tone, particularly in James Carville and Paul Begala's *Take It Back*, is more along the lines of, "Pick something and stand for it!"

Even for the most outspokenly liberal author represented here, David Sirota, it is the passion, clarity, and narrative coherence of a liberal message that makes it appealing, more than its content. One suspects that if a moderately conservative message didn't sound so damn wishy-washy, it would be unobjectionable.

In fact, that seems to be the case with regard to a figure who stands in all of these volumes as a one-man Mount Rushmore for Democratic revival: Montana governor Brian Schweitzer. A gun-toting, straight-talking, populist; innovative and smart, Schweitzer 's 2004 electoral victory—the first for a Democrat running for the Helena statehouse since 1988—was chronicled in these pages by Sirota ("Top Billings," December 2004). Schweitzer has had a wildly successful first year in office, making him emblematic of the tough, fearless, joyful political warrior that all these authors are searching for without regard to ideology. Schweitzer stands in tall Western contrast to another figure who haunts all these books, a group of never-named characters known as "John Kerry's advisors," whose instinct when attacked is always to say, "We mustn't justify it with a response."

Take it Back: Our Country, Our Party, Our Future
By James Carville and Paul Begala
Simon & Schuster, $24.00

Crashing the Gate: Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics
By Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas Zuniga
Chelsea Green Publishing, $25.00

Foxes in the Henhouse: How the Republicans Stole the South and the Heartland and What Democrats Must Do To Run 'Em Out
By Steve Jardin and Dave "Mudcat" Saunders
Touchstone, $24.00

Hostile Takeover: How Big Money and Corruption Conquered Our Government –and How We Can Take It Back
By David Sirota
Crown, $24.00

But what's odd about the veneration of Schweitzer is that he is hardly the only example of Democratic success, even in states that supported Bush. Indeed, he isn't even the only example in Montana, where Democratic Sen. Max Baucus, whose style has more in common with the scared-of-his-own-shadow "John Kerry advisor" than with Schweitzer, has nonetheless won five times as many statewide elections as Schweitzer. And what about governors Dave Freudenthal in Wyoming, Janet Napolitano in Arizona, Kathleen Sebelius in Kansas, or Brad Henry in Oklahoma? Are their Schweitzerian levels of popularity attributable to the same formula?

Indeed, the swath of popular Democratic governors in these and other states is a reminder of an important truth made most strongly by Steve Jarding and Dave "Mudcat" Saunders in *Foxes in the Henhouse*: Democrats can win anywhere and should act like they can win anywhere. Of the 30 states Bush carried, two-thirds have either a Democratic governor or a Democratic senator, and the two biggest Republican-monopoly states besides Texas—Ohio and Missouri—are full of fed-up voters a nd will have highly competitive races for both governor and senator this fall.

But if Democrats can win any-

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where, do they do it as Democrats, or as individuals who separate themselves from the damaged brand of the national Democratic Party? And if the latter, how does that build a party? All four of these books urge Democrats to speak for themselves with more passion, more outrage, to fight back when challenged, and not to accept the conservative frame on issues. But that can mean many things. If personal authenticity is the primary value, then one has to acknowledge that Sen. Joe Lieberman speaks for himself every bit as much as Schweitzer does. While none of these authors has a good thing to say about Lieberman, most speak favorably of former senator Bob Kerrey, who supports both the Iraq war and Social Security privatization, not out of trepidatious calculation, but as a happy warrior with a mind of his own. There is a theory of a political party implicit here, but in only one of these books—*Crashing the Gate* by Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas Zuniga—does it really become clear.

Giving voice to your outrage is the first ingredient in the recipe in all these books, but David Sirota—former Hill press aide and blogger—makes a full meal of it in *Hostile Takeover*. Sirota has always had a lot to say about Democratic renewal and has been one of the major promoters of the Schweitzer story, but in his first book, he keeps the political advice to a minimum and instead tells the story as he would hope to hear it told. It's a useful discipline and the result is a book that could show any political speaker how to forge a compelling narrative. On issue after issue, from taxes to pensions to health care to energy, corporate interests have used their political influence to undermine the public and their customers, promote their short-term profits over the long-term good, and in general ripped us off. And Sirota argues that on each issue, there is a set of public solutions—responsible and achievable—that would answer the takeover and restore public trust.

The congressional lobbying scandal ensures that "reform" will be a centerpiece of the opposition agenda, even for establishment Democrats who are squeamish about that language. The challenge is to get reform out of the empty zone of "good government," where the editorial writers from *The New York Times* live but no actual voters, and connect reform to the substantive issues of life. Sirota's book is a catalogue of stories that show just how to make that connection, so that every discussion of health care can be a discussion of corruption, reform, and better results.

The most refined effort to define a Democratic message comes from Carville and Begala in *Take It Back*. Their book benefits from a rich sense of history and anecdote, and the authors are practiced at writing just this kind of choppy, chatty book without seeming preachy or wonky. Worth the price of the book is a section in which they narrate a typical meeting between a Democratic candidate and his staff and consultants, and then break it down. For example, "Pollster says, 'We're thirty points down on taxes. Don't talk about taxes.'" That's exactly when you have to talk about taxes, Carville and Begala argue, just as Bill Clinton had to talk about welfare.

The largest part of the book, though, is unsatisfying even as it is generally correct. Like Sirota, Carville and Begala outline what Democrats should say on issue after issue. On abortion: "Agree that the goal should be to reduce abortions." On gay marriage: "Attack the right for dividing us." On national security: "Redefine the war on terror."

For all Carville and Begala's political sophistication, this is almost as frustrating as George Lakoff's "reframing" advice was back when it was all the rage. How do you use it? It's easy enough to imagine a Democratic senator appearing on "Meet the Press" and turning a question around: "Well, Tim, the real issue is the right-wing's effort to divide us." Certainly, that's better than a stammering, compromising response or a reference to co-sponsoring some long-forgotten Senate amendment, as that character known as "John Kerry's advisor" would propose. But it's not really the same as reclaiming the issue, either. Politics is defined by the points of conflict on the agenda, and one might wish that "gay marriage" and "partial-birth abortion" weren't the current points of conflict, but wishing doesn't make it so. Reclaiming the debate is not just a matter of coming up with the right answer to someone else's questions, but also actually changing the questions.

That's something a minority party made up of locally-focused governors and powerless members of Congress can't do easily. Perhaps it awaits a presidential front-runner, especially a very high-profile one, who might make good use of Carville and Begala's talking points. (And perhaps they were written with just such a high-profile front-runner in mind.) On the other hand, it's exactly what Newt Gingrich's band of the powerless began to do in the early 1990s. For a party that exists entirely on the outside, though, Sirota's book offers a better set of issues and answers for creating an agenda that forces the burden of response onto the other side.

In their analysis of Republican success, all these books show that the key is not just getting the message right, but segmenting the message based on a sophisticated understanding of demographics—actual Republican voters and potential Republican voters. There's not much mystery about the demographic challenge for Democrats. It involves non-college-educated whites, and particularly rural and exurban white voters. In *Foxes in the Henhouse*, strategists Jarding and Saunders seek the answer to the rural question. Thus, they set out to solve one of the problems left hanging last year by Thomas Frank's

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acclaimed *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Frank argued that rural voters overlooked their own interests by supporting conservative Republicans based on social issues. Frank's book left two questions hanging: Why should people prioritize their material interests over spiritual or other concerns? And, do Democrats really have so much more to offer rural voters, even in the material realm?

Jarding and Saunders answer the second question decisively, showing how government made life in rural America possible, and how effectively conservatives have eroded the liberal programs that from the New Deal on have made life better for the white working class and in rural America. In a masterful final chapter, they point out that Democrats can do more than just assure the 13 million hunters in America that we really, really promise, no-crosses-count, don't want to take away your guns, but instead can show that the real threat to hunting and fishing is a government that is allowing the land to be privatized and plundered. As this magazine has pointed out in "The End of Hunting?" (January/February 2006), it is government that made hunting, fishing, and camping possible, and government that can destroy it. Again, Schweitzer is a role model. Being against gun control is not surprising—most Western Democrats are against gun control. But Schweitzer did it without apology, whacking both the interest groups that advocate strict gun control and the corporate interests bent on destroying "the last, best place."

Unfortunately, through the middle of the book, the authors lose the rural focus and begin to drift into a more general attack on the Republicans as hypocrites and frauds. They devote several pages to reprinting a letter from a group of Nobel Prize-winning economists pointing out the irresponsibility of Republican fiscal policy, for example. That's a long way from "NASCAR Dems." It's too bad they didn't keep the focus on rural America. A good book is yet to be written about the demographic trends, the economic forces, the social and religious trends buffeting rural America, how those are different in the South and the Midwest, and how some political voices handle them successfully.

All four of these books have a staccato, bloggish style, with bullet points and sidebars made up of "myths" and "facts," "lessons" and "lies," "heroes" and "hacks." Ironically, the least blog-like of these, the smoothest and most coherent argument, comes from the two authors best known in the blogosphere, Markos Moulitsas Zuniga and Jerome Armstrong. That shouldn't really be surprising since Moulitsas and Armstrong aren't really bloggers in the sense that *The Washington Monthly*'s Kevin Drum is—individuals with lots of opinions—but, rather, on DailyKos and MyDD, they created platforms for argument and thinking by hundreds of others about progressive politics and Democratic strategy.

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Crashing the Gate similarly represents the views of several dozen people, mostly people you haven't heard of, who have something compelling to say about revitalizing the party.

Crashing the Gate is not without flaws, so let's identify them before moving on. Their consciousness seems to begin in 2003, and what little interest in history they show takes the form of a fascination with the history of the right, viewed—inaccurately—as a well-planned conspiracy. "Somewhere between the mid-sixties and the early seventies," they write, "liberals lost their way and have not recovered," and that's basically all they have to say about that. And they are a little too involved with the "netroots" and their own role in it—a reminder that the guardians of the gate of internet politics can sometimes become an easily flattered interest group of their own, giving up their hearts to politicians who show that they "get it" by venturing into blogger conference calls or blogging for themselves. (When I was growing up in Connecticut, every local politician would show respect to his major ethnic constituencies with a trip to Ireland, Italy, and Israel; today, a trip to the internet must be added to the itinerary.)

But *Crashing the Gate* is about more than the joy of the internet. It is about the Democratic Party as a political system: where power is located within it, how it makes its decisions, how it defines opportunities. Moulitsas and Armstrong write that when they started the book, "We figured the entire thesis would revolve around the lack of branding and the lack of a coherent message," but instead, they wound up writing a book about the structures of progressive politics. And with a clear eye, it sees dysfunction where others just see people saying the wrong things:

They see a party that is beholden to movements that are too weak to help it and that gain their power by manipulating the party. They see it as dominated by a mafia of consultants who are never held accountable for their bad, bad, overcautious, failed advice. They see those consultants continue to crank out dreary political ads that rely on direct, rational persuasion rather than the emotion and indirection of commercial—and Republican—advertising. The party as they see it lacks an external support structure of broadly progressive think tanks and organizing groups, and what there is, its elected officials and party establishment ignore. Its establishment has a narrow, parsimonious vision of its possibilities. That establishment thinks it knows exactly who its voters are, what races should be targeted, and that money can be raised only from known large donors. And it pours money into saturation advertising in a few selected races with diminishing returns, rather than reaching broadly and allocating resources based on modern market data and information technology.

Moulitsas and Armstrong challenge all these assumptions with sound evidence, citing persuasive authorities—such as consultants who, despite their success with more creative advertising and demographic targeting, have been shut out by the party establishment—and they acknowledge and respect the other side of each argument. The discussion of whether political advertising should seek to persuade or be memorable, for example, is thoughtful and sophisticated.

In perhaps the most provocative chapter, Moulitsas and Armstrong cite two examples of progressive/Democratic success in 2004: the Schweitzer victory and an alliance of progressive funders and organizations in Colorado that won back the state's legislature along with several congressional seats and a U.S. Senate seat. Schweitzer, they argue, won by keeping all interest groups at bay, while Colorado Democrats succeeded by bringing them all together. In the future, they argue, these are the only two alternatives: Either all the interest groups represented in the Democrat coalition get in the boat and row together, or political candidates should stand aside completely from the interest-group mess. "Let the party be the party, with the movement outside looking in," they write.

This is a powerful and fresh perspective on what a political party is all about, and it is one reason this book stands out. Their conception of a political party is reminiscent of one of the classics of mid-20th-century political science, E.E. Schattschneider's Party Government. Schattsch-neider similarly saw parties as a way to tame and hold off interest groups. It is this view of a party that collapsed in the late '60s and early '70s, when not only did liberalism "lose its way," but the internal contradictions of the New Deal Democratic coalition of southern conservatives and northern liberals finally became too much to bear.

And here is the history that's missing from their book: After the Democrats lost the white South, they had, by definition, a non-majority coalition, and it quickly became a coalition of special interests, increasingly professionalized. When they won elections, it was with candidates who transcended those interests. Today, having won pluralities and near-majorities in the last four presidential elections, with a near-majority of governors, Democrats are closer to a majority than in, say, 1990, but can never quite cross the line unless they break the old habits. What Brian Schweitzer and the other happy warriors represent is a party that has the daring, the imagination, and, above all, the confidence to expand the base without regard to the existing interests. What Moulitsas and Armstrong recognize is that there's more to that achievement than just saying the right things.

Mark Schmitt is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and author of the weblog The Decembrist.

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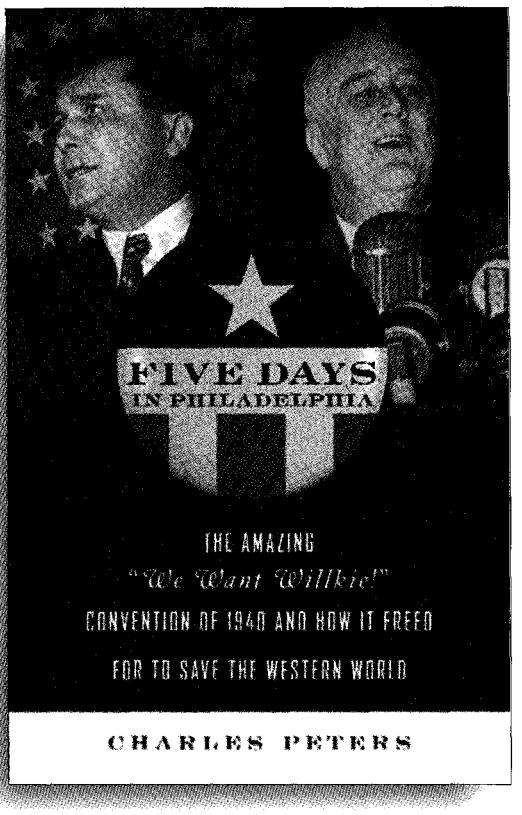

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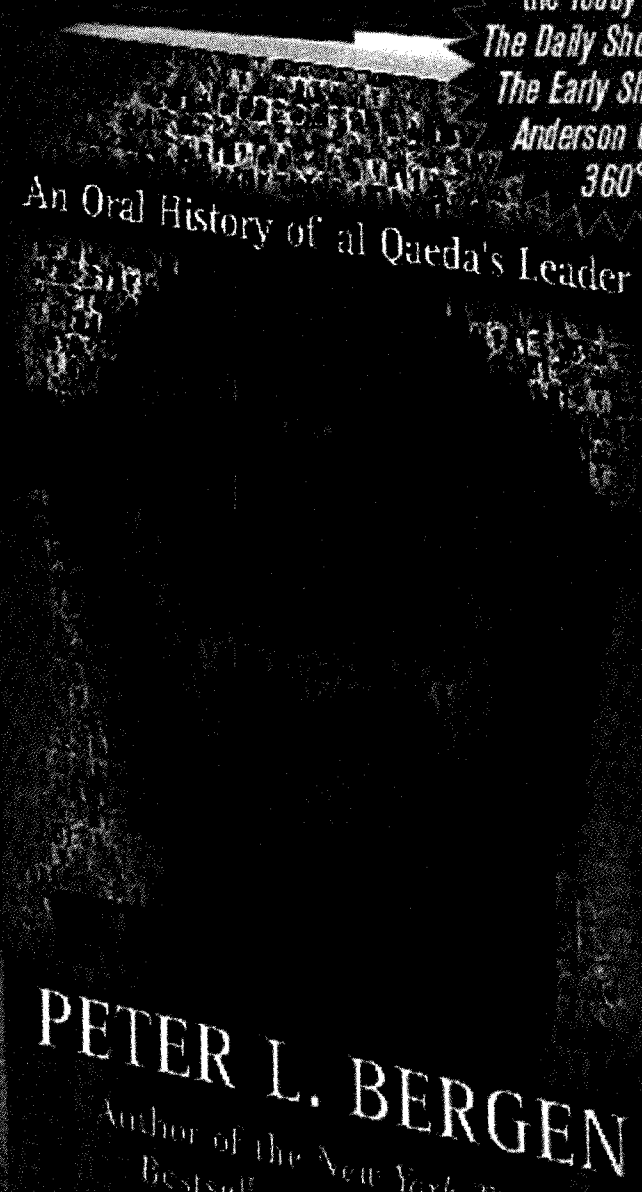

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